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DECEMBER 2014 - OCTING OUT 3/3
THIS
COULD
BE
THE
PLACE

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THIS COULD BE THE PLACE

Guest Editors
BOJANA VIDEKANIC
COLIN CAMPBELL

Editor-in-Chief / **CAOIMHE MORGAN-FEIR**
Marketing & Communications / **LINDSAY LeBLANC**
Subscriptions & Development / **YOLI TERZIYSKA**
Design & Art Direction / **ZACH PEARL**

in consultation with
FRANCISCO-FERNANDO GRANADOS
KATHERINE DENNIS
MICHAEL DiRISIO

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CONTRIBUTORS

ADRIAN STIMSON
ALEKSANDRA KAMINSKA
BASIL ALZERI
CHERYL L'HIRONDELLE
COLIN CAMPBELL
FRANCISCO-FERNANDO GRANADOS
INDU VASHIST
IVAN JURAKIC
JESSICA THOMPSON
JESSICA WYMAN
JOHANNA HOUSEHOLDER
JOHANNES ZITS
KATHY KILOH
KONSTANTIN KILIBARDA
LISA BIRKE
MICHAEL MARANDA
TERRANCE HOULE

ON THE COVER

SCOTT LEE

Documentation from the performance:
Buffalo Boy's Chief Rogue
by Adrian Stimson
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kapsula@kapsula.ca

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WORKING PRECARIOUSLY IN THE ARTS

INTRODUCTION

Bojana Videkanic

In their introduction to *Being an Artist in Post-Fordist Times*, editors Pascal Gielen and Paul De Bruyne express a concern over the transformation of economic, political, and cultural spheres and the way such transformation reflects on art production.[1] They point out that a shift has taken place in the 1970s with the beginning of the post-Fordist era. The era in question takes a form of relentless push of neo-liberal politics, post-production[2] forms of capitalism based on elements of precariousness, language/communication, and finally spectacle[3] as primary forms of organizing meaning in the social sphere. Gielen and De Bruyne's observations, however, are not new; theorists such as Virno, Hardt and Negri, as well as Lyotard and de Certeau have made similar observations in the past. What all of them have in common is that they recognize the ways in which capitalism in the twentieth and twenty first centuries has taken on specific managerial strategies that borrow from the ways in which creative labour functioned for many decades, especially in its emphasis on communication. Now, however, these strategies were implemented at all levels of social life. In *A Grammar of the Multitude* Paolo Virno explains:

> On the other hand, in the post-Ford era, human communication is also an essential ingredient of productive cooperation in general; thus, it is the reigning productive force, something that goes beyond the domain of its own sphere, pertaining, instead, to the industry as a whole, to poiesis in its totality. In the spectacle we find exhibited, in a separate and fetishized form, the most relevant productive forces of society, those productive forces on which every contemporary work process must draw: linguistic competence, knowledge, imagination, etc.[4]

Although this transformation might seem progressive, due to its emphasis on individualism and creativity, and because it seemed similar to a genuine critique of Fordist economy by the labour movement of the 1970s, it is in fact an insidious capitalist model that strives towards growing insecurity as a form of management[5] of all human labor, and life itself. In a recent article on the transformation of the American Universities, Noam Chomsky points out the twenty-year trajectory of the neo-liberal precarious management in the institutions of higher learning. Chomsky mentions Alan Greenspan's 1997 testimony in front of the American Congress as a particularly worrisome example of prioritizing precariousness in which Greenspan overtly called for an increase in "greater worker insecurity" as a competitive, and even desirable form of management. Chomsky argues that the insecurity of the new labour force––the precariat—now extends to universities and colleges, historically critical spaces, closing the magic circle of the new capital's transformation of the socio-political and economic structures.

Greenspan's call for optimization of the corporate sector by turning all jobs into precarious jobs, and tapping into workers' creativity and

flexibility as ways to enhance corporate competitiveness echoes loudly in the sphere of cultural production, and is at the core of what Gielen and De Bruyne highlight in *Being an Artist*.[6] Two authors connect an increased celebration of the so-called 'culture industry' to its inherent instability––the fact that cultural workers have normally had to make do with the scanty resources they were given, often working without proper compensation, financial stability, job security, healthcare etc. The mythology behind what were perceived as bohemian, individualistic, flexible, and even glamorous characteristics of an artist's work life, became some of the primary motifs behind its appeal as a way to organize the neo-liberal society anchored by the spectacle of the commodity object. Authors further suggest that one of the problems with culture in the age of post-Fordist production is that, increasingly, corporate managers in the new immaterial economy have adopted creativity, flexibility, individuality as approaches to managing, and even surveilling their workers. They write,

> managers that started out directing collective production, steering it in the right direction from a safe distance, became transformed into so-called neo-managers who now addressed individual workers about their creativity and co-responsibility.[7]

Vitality, creativity, individuality and flexibility have therefore become raw material ready for extraction by the managerial class, used as a form of control; new capitalist workers (blue, white, and no collar alike) are expected to behave creatively in their workplaces and at home, and are made responsible for corporate failure without always sharing in benefits of the success. Workers are also expected to be 'on' at all times via the ubiquitous technologies that serve as forms of surveillance at a distance. The perceived glamorous qualities of freedom, individualism, and creativity of artistic life have become the very instruments of the new capitalism's greatest success: its colonization of human life in its entirety. Riffing on Tiqqun, Colin Campbell, my colleague and the co-editor of this issue, argues that indeed metaphysics, or what once was a domain of cultural production or philosophy,

> is no longer only the concern of philosophers in ivory towers, as was traditionally presumed; the music of the spheres has been brought down to earth, in the constant play of light and sound, in the information available to our ears and eyes and at our fingertips.[8]

Perhaps we could re-name today's precarious management 'metaphysical management,' but also acknowledge that metaphysics has been damaged, shaped to fit the world of the corporation. This precarious metaphysics extends generally; as Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri write in their seminal text *Empire*,

> in the biological context of Empire, however, the production of capital converges ever more with the production and reproduction of social life itself; it thus becomes ever more difficult to maintain distinctions among productive, reproductive, and unproductive labor. Labor—material or immaterial, intellectual or corporeal—produces and reproduces social life, and in the process is exploited by capital.[9]

Given its new central role in producing Empire, the question haunting contemporary culture/art is "what does it mean to be an artist in post-Fordist times?"[10] As Gielen and De Bruyne point out, although art has an elevated status in today's rising creative industry, its status comes with a caveat—art's key values of autonomy, creativity, vitality and flexibility are also used to spread insecurity. The challenge before the contemporary artistic community is how to mount a constructive search "for artistic spaces that fuel an artistic as well as ethical, political, and economic sense of possibilities."[11] But where can such spaces be found? The wayfinders of the past have proven shaky at best, or just plain wrong. Modernist and postmodernist aesthetic, political, cultural, and material wayfinders are confusing and misleading. The colonization of the artistic space of creativity by the

capitalist machine is therefore an important question that haunts contemporary art and that demands answers. Some answers might be found in aesthetic practices that evade the laws of new capitalism, those that seek to propose 'other worlds' and other modes of being. The question we posed is, where are the wayfinders for this time of creative and productive overload? This Could be the Place starts from these observations. The six-day event, organized by Ivan Jurakic, director/curator of the University of Waterloo Art Gallery (UWAG) and Bojana Videkanic assistant professor in the Department Fine Arts at the University of Waterloo, took place on UWaterloo campus and engaged various participants in contemporary Canadian culture asking them to think about the ways in which art and culture could propose alternatives to the onslaught of new and insidious capitalist colonization. The choice of the title *This Could be the Place* deliberately points to something that today's capitalism could not colonize, and that is art's capacity to revel and flourish in complete confusion, to operate under misrepresentations, failures, and in dead-end streets, in short to be completely frivolous and unproductive (unproductive, that is, in terms of how capitalism understands 'production').

The title *This Could be the Place* (a statement as much as it is a question), poses a challenge to perhaps see if that which is such a large part of the process of creative labour (meaning failure, unpredictability, confusion, laziness, disorientation, aimlessness, and so on) could also be the way to propose spaces outside of our current predicament. Five days of performances and interventions by artists attempted to do this. Performances by Terrance Houle, Johannes Zits, Cheryl L'Hirondelle, Lisa Birke, and Adrian Stimson, and installations/interventions by Jessica Thomson and Adrian Blackwell can be read as attempts to find new wayfinders for our engagement with the world. In the case of abovementioned artists, these wayfinders take on a guise of performative actions and installations, or interventions in the here and now, proposing the ways in which artists open up possibilities of new modes of engaging with our reality. Their work—from Houle and Stimson's performance of the politics of memory-as-potential, to the apparent futility of Lisa Birke's *Egg Stock*, to the simple profundity of Cheryl L'Hirondelle's raising of the tipi in the darkness and Jessica Thompson's interactive sound suitcase—speaks to the ways that the unpredictable nature of art can pose a challenge to easy and superficial instrumentalization of culture. In addition, the one-day symposium which took also place at the University of Waterloo Art Gallery further addressed and expanded on precariousness and cultural work in contemporary Canadian society. A number of papers presented a variety of viewpoints on the state of precariousness of art and culture, from sociological studies of artist's income, the state of education and the academy, to identity and indigenous culture in its relationship to precariousness of new capitalism.

This Could be the Place was also invested in examining and presenting performance art as one of the possible venues for effective artistic responses to precarity. Performance art in particular can serve as a useful model for evading post-Fordist precarity because of its inherent ephemerality and propensity for negating, or resisting all forms of institutionalization, as Johanna Householder argues in her text "Re]Production and the Precarity of Immaterial Culture". For Householder, performance art, and especially feminist performance art, always rested on the idea of evasion as a strategy. She notices that the move in the recent decades towards archiving and re-performing performance art could be signs of performance art's move into institutional paradigms, or maybe not:

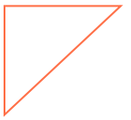
> Artists—especially perhaps feminist artists—in fact resisted or wanted to preempt the institutionalization of performance by corrupting the 'authenticity' of the original performance and replacing it with copies, and other versions, before it could be archived.[12]

Performance art's inherent precarity and risk are also its greatest strengths, as many artists continually purposefully sabotage any attempts at instrumentalization of their work.

This ability of not just performance art, but all art, is at the same time the key to answering the question of what should artists do in post-Fordist times. This of course is not an easy task as artists are dependent on socio-economic and political structures through which they sustain their practice. Grants, scholarships, residencies, and finally exhibitions/festivals are the primary artistic networks that allow artists to share their work and exist. These networks are getting ever smaller and often artists are juggling not just writing of grant proposals, residency applications, exhibition packages, but are at the same time often working other and often odd jobs in order to survive. Precarity is evident on all levels of artistic existence as both Michael Maranda, in his "Waging Culture" research, and Basil ALZeri in his show "Work It" tell us. Evidently then, resistance to post-Fordist economy has to be made aesthetically and politically.

Concerns and theoretical observations posed by theories of precarious labor and culture take on a new meaning in the Canadian context as it involves not just questions of colonization of creativity, but also questions of actual colonization of Indigenous land and resources. Precariousness in Canada is therefore implicated in capitalist relationships to labour, and more broadly to natural resources, and to those who have rights to such resources (namely indigenous ancestral lands, treaty rights, and their ongoing battle for sovereignty, respect, dignity, or even simply survival as the ongoing humanitarian disaster still continues on some reserves). Recent political and cultural movements such as Idle no More speak to these concerns and open up a new field of possibility to create spaces outside of the overwhelming neo-liberal cultural, political and economic production. *This Could be the Place* also sought to address this particular moment in contemporary Canadian art by asking indigenous artists to speak to their view of precarity vis-à-vis indigenous identity, politics, and culture. Cheryl L'Hirondelle did this in her presentation *The Lightness of Creating in the Dark* by claiming the territory of the University of Waterloo Art Gallery, and the University itself, by raising a light tipi in the cavernous darkness of the gallery space. Listening to her calm voice speaking about experience of art-making, memory and precarity also made it clear that while her performance/presentation was temporal it was also there to stay, marking the space in memory and as potential, with the smell of the burning grass, and light of the tipi. Similarly, Terrance Houle's powerful performance *Friend of Foe* seamlessly worked various threads of personal, political and cultural memory into a work that speaks to the ways we remember in general, and more specifically, the ways in which indigenous memory is shaped by the colonial settler narrative, or more precisely, violence. Finally, Adrian Stimson's *Buffalo Boy's Chief Rogue* took on a more directly political tone by speaking to a particular moment in the contemporary Canadian political milieu, the federal government's education policies. Stimson's Buffalo Boy takes on the government by banding together rogue chiefs chosen from the audience members.

In this follow-up volume in KAPSULA Magazine, the events of *This Could be the Place* are extended to present and document artists and academics' works in a printed form, to be disseminated and hopefully spur on more discussions on the same topic. I am, however keeping in mind other artists, cultural workers and arts supporters who have dealt with these questions for some time. I am thinking of Carol Condé and Karl Beveridge, Adrian Blackwell, Allyson Mitchell, Christine Shaw, Greig de Peuter, Wanda Nanibush and many others who have been making work and have been intervening in Canada's socio-economic and political structures. Perhaps there is life outside of the matrix!

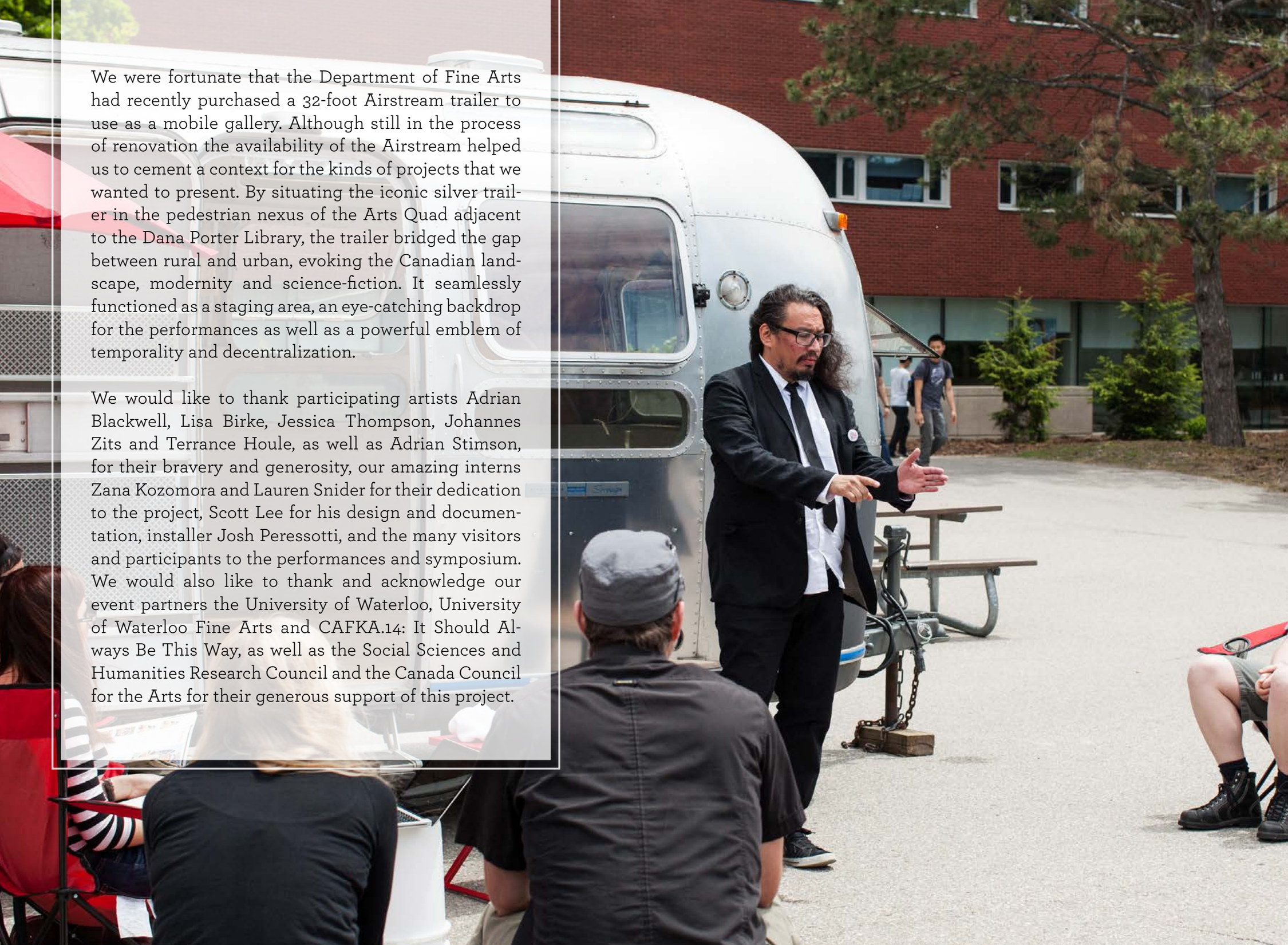


CURATING ***THIS COULD BE THE PLACE***

Ivan Jurakic and Bojana Videkanic

Curating demands an odd skill set, from hard administrative and organizational acumen to more ephemeral abilities like problem solving and networking. It's a mix of knowing and feeling, of following hunches with an ability to put the right people together in the right context and assemble works in a meaningful way. Curating, particularly when it ventures beyond the safety zone of the white cube is embedded with a sense of risk, courting the possibility of failure. Working off-site is predicated on temporality, the precarious availability of the sites in question and the disposition of an accidental audience.

This Could be the Place emerged out of conversations about our shared aesthetic, political and theoretical interests. Dialogues that merged performativity with politics and a desire to extend the gallery program out onto the main campus. We set out to address precarity as a generative quality underlying our collaboration. We wanted to define a sense of place and our sometimes problematic relationship to it: the University of Waterloo as an urban periphery, a campus deprived of wayfinding, a place of higher learning better known for Engineering than Arts. What would it mean to address performativity in *this* place? We riffed on the anxious energy of Talking Heads "This Must Be The Place" but it felt too declarative, and as commuters we had our own misgivings. This wasn't the place, but surely it could be. *Could* made more sense. It suggested navigating a level of uncertainty.



We were fortunate that the Department of Fine Arts had recently purchased a 32-foot Airstream trailer to use as a mobile gallery. Although still in the process of renovation the availability of the Airstream helped us to cement a context for the kinds of projects that we wanted to present. By situating the iconic silver trailer in the pedestrian nexus of the Arts Quad adjacent to the Dana Porter Library, the trailer bridged the gap between rural and urban, evoking the Canadian landscape, modernity and science-fiction. It seamlessly functioned as a staging area, an eye-catching backdrop for the performances as well as a powerful emblem of temporality and decentralization.

We would like to thank participating artists Adrian Blackwell, Lisa Birke, Jessica Thompson, Johannes Zits and Terrance Houle, as well as Adrian Stimson, for their bravery and generosity, our amazing interns Zana Kozomora and Lauren Snider for their dedication to the project, Scott Lee for his design and documentation, installer Josh Peressotti, and the many visitors and participants to the performances and symposium. We would also like to thank and acknowledge our event partners the University of Waterloo, University of Waterloo Fine Arts and CAFKA.14: It Should Always Be This Way, as well as the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the Canada Council for the Arts for their generous support of this project.

Section One

PRECARIOUS PERFORMANCE

BOJANA VIDEKANIC

INTRODUCTION

> In seeking to understand the three moments of social space, it may help to consider the body. All the more so inasmuch as the relationship to space of a 'subject' who is a member of a group or society implies his relationship to his own body and vice versa. Considered overall, social practice presupposes the use of the body: the use of the hands, members and sensory organs, and the gestures of work as of activity unrelated to work.[1]

Henri Lefebvre points to an important truth of human existence: our bodies are intricately connected to social spaces, spaces which construct networks of being and acting in the world. Amelia Jones points to a similar idea—an inherent intersubjectivity and imbrication of the embodied subject in the social.[2] This imbrication, as Jones calls it, is most clearly manifested in the work of performance artists who uncover, via various interventions, these intricate embodied relations. The work of performance artists, however, has always been precarious as it involves a specific risk that the artist has to take vis-à-vis her audiences and her own practice—as an audience member one always enters an unwritten (sometimes written) contract with the artist that one may witness, or be a part of anything and everything, that all is possible. Precarity of performance art is also mirrored in a more socio-economic, material sense, as a performance artist rarely has something to trade or sell (other than maybe leftover nails from a spectacular nailing to a car,) and the performances are notoriously ephemeral, fleeting, and improvised. These particular elements of performance art are also its greatest assets, as they allow artists to speak to the social space in a more powerful way.

In more recent years precarity has garnered much attention not only because the world has been plunged into a large-sale recession, but also because the aftermath of that recession created a rhetoric of 'austerity' and 'debt' which have been hovering over millions of people's lives (people who had nothing to do with the initial bankruptcy of the new capitalism). This precarity, sold to us through various social and media outlets, is touted as the new norm, and is used to keep the precariat (the new class of uncertain workers) in check. The only way to offer alternatives to the onslaught of precarity-as-a- way-of-being in the new social space is to offer ways to uncover the sinister nature of such social space and work against it. Some of the performances and texts presented at *This Could be the Place* offer possible suggestions to how to do this.

Johanna Householder's text "[Re]Production and the Precarity of Immaterial Culture" discusses the so-called archival and re-performance turn in recent performance art. One of the most famous of such events is certainly Marina Abramovic's Guggenheim project *Seven Easy Pieces*. Householder discusses the archival turn by asking a very pertinent question: can archiving and re-performing performance art cause damage to it? In short, her answer is 'who cares?' More importantly, Householder points to a deeper question, one that deals with the very nature of performance art, and that is that performance artists (feminist

artists in particular) anticipated the archival turn and were interested in sabotaging it right from the start. This of course was a political decision aimed at critiquing and resisting performance art's institutionalization, and the gendered nature of the archive. Performance art's innate immateriality and precarity are political instruments by which artists are able to evade institutional impetus found in all art. More importantly, what Householder's text also reveals is that every art form contains the seeds of undoing its own ossification. Perhaps that is a way to start to work against the grain of our precarious social sphere.

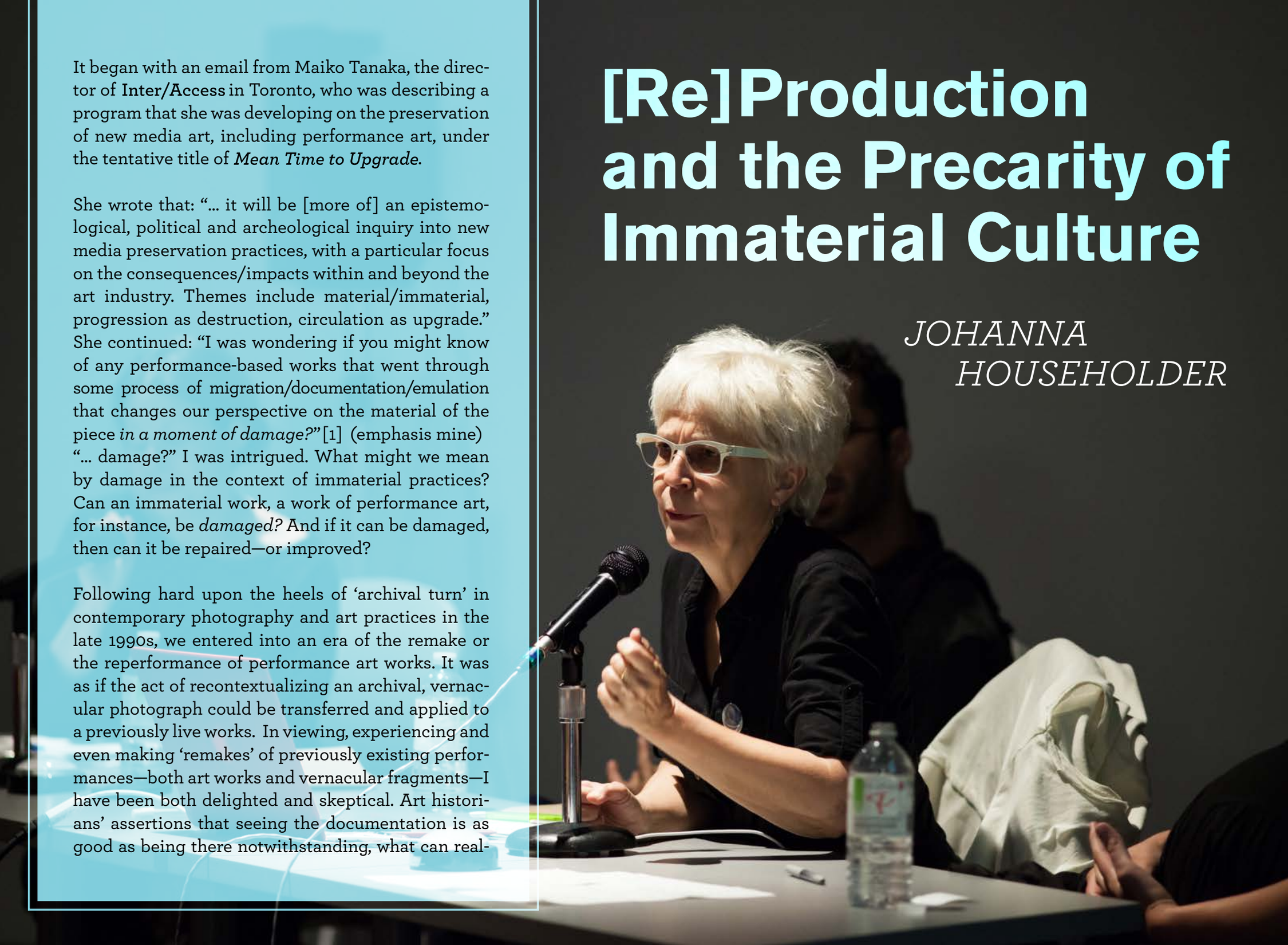
Jessica Thompson's *Swinging Suitcase* is an interactive action based on artist's sound practice. During her intervention on University of Waterloo campus, Thompson allowed passers-by to come and carry around a suitcase, which emitted bird song. As one moved and swung the suitcase the bird song changed, becoming complex. Although this piece might appear at first to be a flight of fancy, it is, as the artist herself states, a more profound investigation of how sound and body interact in public spaces. In fact what happens when one indulges in carrying of Thompson's suitcase is a moment of sheer joy at intervening in an otherwise public and often policed space. More importantly, the person using the suitcase becomes a performer, and with that also becomes an intervener in social space—as such the work is also an exercise in social practice.

Lisa Birke's *Egg Stock* is a provocative performance that took place on campus of University of Waterloo, and on an actual golf course in Kitchener Waterloo area. Birke smashed around 400 raw eggs with a set of golf clubs. Her performance was both exhausting and exhilarating as we watched her struggle to hit each egg. What became apparent very quickly was the futility of her gesture, and of course, its spectacular failure. Birke's work is a comment on infinitely tedious and ultimately hideous demands placed on women in today's workforce. Moreover, Birke makes us aware of the ways in which precarity of existence, although obviously ridiculous and spectacular (in the most negative sense) under the rule of new capitalism, is something that none of us can avoid.

Finally, Johannes Zits' piece *Looking For Guides To An Alternative* is a longer (two day in fact) performance involving the artist deconstructing his clothes and then reconstructing them as a long piece of weaving. The piece was performed at the University of Waterloo campus. In the process of deconstruction Zits also asks for audience to donate their own clothes. His piece uncovers the structure of work involved with making of what we wear. We become aware of the work involved in production of clothing, and questions of who, where, and for how much produces the items we wear on everyday basis. But more importantly, Zits asks us to consider the precarious nature of global capitalism by exposing his own body as a symbolic vessel of both exploitation and redemption.

[Re]Production and the Precarity of Immaterial Culture

JOHANNA HOUSEHOLDER



It began with an email from Maiko Tanaka, the director of **Inter/Access** in Toronto, who was describing a program that she was developing on the preservation of new media art, including performance art, under the tentative title of ***Mean Time to Upgrade***.

She wrote that: "... it will be [more of] an epistemological, political and archeological inquiry into new media preservation practices, with a particular focus on the consequences/impacts within and beyond the art industry. Themes include material/immaterial, progression as destruction, circulation as upgrade." She continued: "I was wondering if you might know of any performance-based works that went through some process of migration/documentation/emulation that changes our perspective on the material of the piece *in a moment of damage?*" [1] (emphasis mine) "... damage?" I was intrigued. What might we mean by damage in the context of immaterial practices? Can an immaterial work, a work of performance art, for instance, be *damaged?* And if it can be damaged, then can it be repaired—or improved?

Following hard upon the heels of 'archival turn' in contemporary photography and art practices in the late 1990s, we entered into an era of the remake or the reperformance of performance art works. It was as if the act of recontextualizing an archival, vernacular photograph could be transferred and applied to a previously live works. In viewing, experiencing and even making 'remakes' of previously existing performances—both art works and vernacular fragments—I have been both delighted and skeptical. Art historians' assertions that seeing the documentation is as good as being there notwithstanding, what can real-

ly be gleaned about the nature of a performance from a reconstruction based on a handful of black and white photos? Should I have been appalled or even outraged instead?

In the world of 'reformance' as the Colombian artist Carlos Monroy[2] has dubbed it – the world of remakes, re-performances, reconstructions, reenactments, reembodiments and do-overs - performances are constantly migrating - not only to new platforms, but to new bodies and new (new as in different than the original) contexts. New bodies bring new viewers and new socialities. New contexts expose new power relations and politics: rip-off, copy, plagiarize, expand, build upon, homage. How does performance art feel about its ability to move freely through bodies in relation to other, more materially grounded practices – and how might performance artists react when their works slip out from under them?

To the Archive Turn

> "...performance has historically been viewed as a profoundly embodied phenomenon,
> with no easy way to isolate its formal, sociopolitical, and site-specific elements." [3]

In her Introduction to a special issue of *Visual Resources* in 2002 titled "Following the Archival Turn: Photography, the Museum, and the Archive", Cheryl Simon described the moment:

> ... the idea of an "archival turn" makes reference to the increased appearance of historical and archival photographs and artifacts, and the approximation of archival forms, in the art and photographic practices of the 1990s. A phenomenon that encompassed both art production as well as curatorial activity, it became common by the end of that decade to find ephemera from police, public, medical, and social science institutions, *as well as documentation from the art museum's own archives*, within the aesthetic repertoire of the contemporary art museum.[4] [emphasis mine]

We begin with a performance, an action—and simultaneously there is documentary evidence: photographs, audio and video recordings, and other evidentiary products which shoot past the embodied phenomenon, as it were, and usurp the place of the physical action. These are fragments, images, photo and video, notes etc. that can then be collected, and in what is now common parlance, archived. And now, like any archive it is vulnerable to fire, flood and misinterpretation.

It was as if performance artists couldn't wait for the documentation to become archived material, to settle into the archives. Instead they (if you'll allow me to refer to any group of artists as 'they') saw the usefulness of this material to the ongoing ontological discussion on the nature of performance, and began almost immediately to reperform some of what later came to be regarded as the canonical works of 60s and 70s performance art. Favourite remakes include/d Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece*, Abramovic and Ulay *Imponderabilia*, *Baldessari Sings* LeWitt, Joseph Beuys' *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, and numerous and various works by Vito Acconci and Bruce Nauman. And then in 2005, Marina Abramovic herself performed/reperformed the widely written about and discussed *Seven Easy Pieces* at the Guggenheim.

I will not describe it in detail—the seven pieces are works by Acconci, Beuys, Valie Export, Nauman, Gina Pane, and Abramovic herself—but I do want to consider a couple of examples from it in the context of thinking about damage.

What constitutes "damage" and how does context determine it? Could we think about recuperating the term, which typically suggests harm, impairment (a term critiqued in critical disability studies), weakened, or blemished? Or, for performance, is reperformance a complex, simultaneous mix of potential damage and potential reinvigoration?

Cheryl Simon observed that in the archival turn "... it is significant that the historical materials and forms presented in these works are derived from, or make reference to *institutional settings*. Insofar as the *archival turn* typically involves the movement of visual materials from extra-artistic contexts into the field of art, the phenomenon can also be interpreted as a late-stage manifestation of post-modernist appropriational practices; *the turning inside-out of the institutions of modernism*, if you will." [5] [emphasis mine.]

Is there a relationship between the turning inside-out of the institutions and the coincidental entry of performance *into* institutions – museums and academia? And furthermore, what is the relationship between the entry of performance art into the institutions and the proliferation of the remake?

Performance is at its root an anti-modern practice, an iconoclastic position that has always sought to resist the institutions of art, and evade its commodification, in favor of a zone in which the ideas of art could be freely accessed. Performance was also a medium of feminist expression and an entry point for feminist art making into the modern/post-modern moment. Performance artists—especially perhaps feminist artists–resisted or wanted to *pre-empt* the institutionalization of performance by corrupting the 'authenticity' of the original performance and replacing it with copies, and other versions, before it could be enshrined, ensuring its mutability while underlining the gendered state of the archive. A core aspect of the feminist project of the 70s and 80s was also to "turn the institutions of modernism inside out."[5] The archival turn in performance in a sense happened simultaneously with the arrival of performance on the contemporary scene.

Perform, Record, Repeat

In "Not What It Seems: The Politics of Re-Performing Vito Acconci's Seedbed," Theresa Smalec suggests that Marina Abramovic "... effectively generates two sets of pleasures, and two performances. One performance relies on conventional documents. Through select photos, videos, and audiotapes of this show it will attain symbolic status in the cultural domain; this is the framed performance that future spectators will know. The second performance is her unruly engagement with Acconci's original, and the subversive ways in which her use of his documentation *deflects*—as opposed to "directly reflects"[6]—his aesthetic project and sensibility.[7]

As much as I find the enshrinement of her own work through the *7 Easy Pieces* Project highly problematic, Abramovic's own discourse around the trajectory of the

remake is informative: “in the 1960s and 70s, the rules of performance were threefold: 1. No rehearsal. 2. No repetition. 3. No predictable end.” And while Abramovic may have meant no predictable *ending* for #3, we find for immaterial practices, no end in sight.

There was another strategy adopted, and outcome with the recreation of Valie Export’s *Action Pants: Genital Panic*. In this reversioning what is lost? The two sets of performances (and 9 orgasms) that were produced in the Seedbed are not generated by Abramovic’s Export, instead there is a flattening, a collapse of Export into Abramovic. There is indeed “no easy way to isolate its formal, sociopolitical, and site-specific elements” of the original *Genital Panic*, in spite of the Easy Pieces title. Removed from the street and the porno house, Export’s *Panic* is rendered into an impotent image restaged in the safe, desexualized space of the museum. In my view it has been damaged in that its potential for rage has been effectively defused.

Revivals, Copies, Clones and Do-overs

You would have to mount a very powerful argument to convince me that the damage done to Vito Acconci’s early video performances including *Contact, Focal Points,* and *Pryings* from 1971 and *Theme Song* from 1973 by Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy in their video, *Fresh Acconci* (1995), wasn’t a) worth it, b) an improvement c) damaging to the originals.

In *Fresh Acconci*, McCarthy and Kelley re-stage the seminal 1970s performance works by Vito Acconci, with a softcore-porn aesthetic sensibility, with luscious nudes replacing Acconci’s own unlovely body and his seedy apartment with a candlelit playboy mansion. As McCarthy describes it: “[This] is a reference to art now, [now being 1995] to a resurgence of the 1970s and an interest in youth in the art world. In *Fresh Acconci*, the New York art scene is sandwiched with Hollywood. Two aesthetics overlap. The tape itself crosses lines of what is politically correct, exploitation and softening or *obscuring the meaning*.” [8] [emphasis mine]

Damage vs. Sabotage

Two final confounding examples of damage, sabotage, and the potential for recuperation.

In 2002, then Toronto-based artist Maria LeGault began making versions of ***The Apology Project***, which included solo and group live performances and a video. A large version of the project was performed at Nuit Blanche in 2009.

In February 2014, well-documented Hollywood plagiarist Shia LaBeouf began a five-day “performance art installation,” *#IAMSORRY*, in Los Angeles. According to National Post reporter Rebecca Tucker, that while reviewers compared LaBeouf’s action to Marina Abramovic’s *The Artist is Present*, “It’s also worth noting that *#IAMSORRY* bears a striking resemblance to Toronto artist Maria Legault’s *Apology Project*, which involved a number of people dressed in head-to-toe paper bags cramming into a narrow hallway and apologizing repeatedly to anyone who tried to walk through—which, if he’s aware of it, could make *#IAMSORRY* the nadir of Shia LaBeouf’s apologizing through borrowed ideas.” [9]

What makes this damaging to Legault is of course, the power differential. Rich, white, male LaBeouf's "work" is highly, even obnoxiously visible – while the immaterial labour of Legault, a female, canadian, performance artist receeds and it's possible that any future reperformance of *The Apology Project* may be seen in the light of the LaBeouf project.

Life [in Progress] (2008-), is a project by one of the three artists known as Janez Janša. The project documented a group of women artists through their pregnancies and into motherhood and produced–following the instructions for *Imponderabilia* (1977) by Abramović and Ulay (in which visitors to the gallery had to squeeze between the two artists' naked bodies)–a series of monumental photographs. "In Janša's treatment, *Imponderabilia* is handled as a quotation from which a different work develops that establishes certain key differences of meaning and message in its implementation and implication."[10]

As part of the project, Janša distributed instructions encouraging the audience to actively participate in and interact with the artwork. Some instructions were seen as "translations and transfers" of artworks into scores for performances that might happen in everyday life. "Even though they seem ironic, playful and even humorous, in their actual implementation, they potentially also raise discomfort, shame and vulnerability or are even in conflict with the law. According to the artist, the project turns around the traditional logic of representation: it is not art that represents life, it is rather life that follows the artistic scenario." Here it seems another stage is reached; not damage, possibly improvement but also simply the liberation of an idea. Gayatri Spivak might call it affirmative sabotage. "Why throw away beautifully developed tools?"[11] she asks, when one can turn them around.

JESSICA THOMPSON

Swinging Suitcase

My practice investigates spatial and social conditions within urban environments through interactive artworks situated at the intersection of sound, performance, and mobile technologies. The approach to both sound and media is greatly informed by my experience of walking in urban environments, which I consider to be a form of personal and spatial encoding. I began working with sound and technology simultaneously out of a desire to articulate the immediacy of walking while carving out a sense of place within the acoustic ecology of the city. Over the past decade, I have navigated these spaces through a gradual progression from headphone-based artworks to interactive pieces that integrate, through embodied interaction, the affordances of objects with the expressive potential of the body.

Swinging Suitcase generates and broadcasts the sound of a flock of house sparrows in response to movement. Vocalizations are constructed from source clips of house sparrows, which are arranged into responses that range from single chirps to social chatter to territorial scolding. House sparrows are small tan and brown birds found almost exclusively in urban environments. Variations are located in almost every part of the world due to a relative lack of enemies, high reproduction rates and their deliberate introduction into unpopulated areas by humans. The birds are generally located wherever there is human activity and at different points in history have been associated with rats, mice and other pests because of their tendency to also eat grain. During China's *Four Pests Campaign* in the late 1950s, sparrows were

eliminated in the hundreds of thousands.

In *Noise*, Jacques Attali historicizes economic development through sound, arguing that noise serves as a precursor to social and economic change. Conditions within cities are often revealed through sound, indicating territory, demographics or functionality, and politicizing urban space through its ability to invade the acoustic space of others and to affect behavior. One of the most significant encounters that informed how I think about broadcast occurred on the Queen streetcar in downtown Toronto. It was rush hour, and I was sitting towards the back of the streetcar. A few minutes later, a boy of about fifteen sat across the aisle from me and began to blast music from his headphones as loud as he could. As we approached the downtown core, the vehicle became crowded, however, instead of moving to the back of the streetcar, most passengers who were standing stayed towards the front. In the same way that house sparrows use scolding to ward off other animals, the distorted hip hop emanating from cheap ear buds had caused full grown adults to crowd together rather than sit down near us.

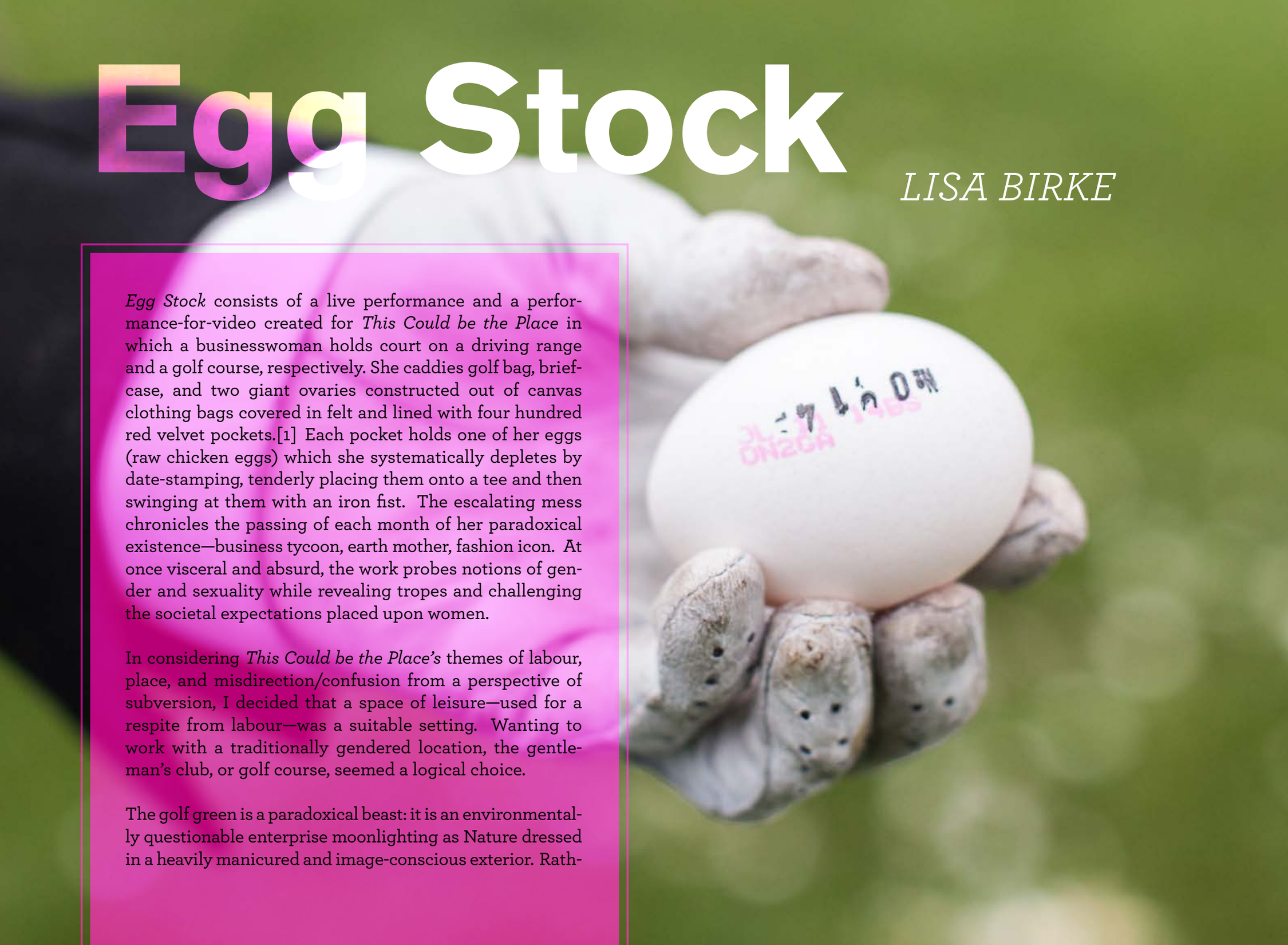
Broadcasting sound through the moving body, whether through the act of walking with a boom box or through interaction with and through artifacts, can transform public spaces into social spaces through nonverbal modes of communication. In *Swinging Suitcase*, anthropomorphized sound and gestural interaction combine to reflect and then confound the relationship between user and artwork. While we understand that objects do not have feelings, if an event occurs that triggers a deeply ingrained social behavior, we will automatically respond according to the social conventions that we know – for example,

if computers are programmed to display "human" qualities, we are more likely to treat them as we would another human. When the suitcase is swung, the "birds" begin to make noise, which calibrate to reflect the rate of swinging, accelerating and multiplying in response to the gesture of the user, and then confounding the interaction by abruptly changing when the gestures become repetitive and the "birds" become "bored." If something we are swinging changes sound, our natural response is to change motion, which in turn changes the vocalization pattern. As the user continually learns and re-learns the piece, the gestures become more complex, reflecting the cognitive process of the user and shifting exploratory gesture into the realm of performance. *As you 'play' the birds, the birds 'play' you.*

As our sense of place is continually shaped through private modes of listening, we become increasingly uncomfortable with the everyday noise and noisemaking of cities. By generating sound through the moving body, we are able to facilitate actions, contexts and situations that are not possible with the body alone, and to extend the edge of the body beyond our devices and into the realm of others. Sound, then, through its physicality, itinerancy and invasiveness, enables us to *un-silence the social*, re-connecting us with one and another and to the places we call home.

Egg Stock

LISA BIRKE



Egg Stock consists of a live performance and a performance-for-video created for *This Could be the Place* in which a businesswoman holds court on a driving range and a golf course, respectively. She caddies golf bag, briefcase, and two giant ovaries constructed out of canvas clothing bags covered in felt and lined with four hundred red velvet pockets.[1] Each pocket holds one of her eggs (raw chicken eggs) which she systematically depletes by date-stamping, tenderly placing them onto a tee and then swinging at them with an iron fist. The escalating mess chronicles the passing of each month of her paradoxical existence—business tycoon, earth mother, fashion icon. At once visceral and absurd, the work probes notions of gender and sexuality while revealing tropes and challenging the societal expectations placed upon women.

In considering *This Could be the Place's* themes of labour, place, and misdirection/confusion from a perspective of subversion, I decided that a space of leisure—used for a respite from labour—was a suitable setting. Wanting to work with a traditionally gendered location, the gentleman's club, or golf course, seemed a logical choice.

The golf green is a paradoxical beast: it is an environmentally questionable enterprise moonlighting as Nature dressed in a heavily manicured and image-conscious exterior. Rath-

er than being an escape from the workplace, golf seems to subscribe to many of the linear, competitive and highly structured strategies of the corporate world. When playing the game there is little potential for deviating from the set course of the clearly numbered greens. Groups of golfers follow one another in a steady stream of motorized vehicles meandering on a single winding path; players stick to the high and narrow and avoid the pit falls at all costs. Golfers practise a studied form in stance and swing, wear a specific uniform and follow proper etiquette. The shoes they walk in are generally white. High heels are not a good choice as the heels sink into the grass causing balance and weight distribution issues. It was thus important that the heroine of Egg Stock be dressed to be on her game in open-for-business attire, wedges firmly planted.

The game of golf personifies an almost nihilistic existentialism in the absurdity of attempting to hit a tiny ball into a distant tiny hole while being confronted with one's physical and psychological 'dis-coordination' with every swing. The game is less an escape from and more an entrapment in the everyday grind. Golf is thus an ironic symbol of what affluence, privilege and the subsequent leisure time afford. Despite my many grievances with the problematic signification embedded in the sport, it is its many contradictory elements that also make golf a particularly conceptually rich and appealing muse.

While having a clear beginning and end, the game of golf simultaneously embodies cyclical time. Curiously, one plays rounds and could (money permitting) continue playing into eternity. This is unlike the female cycle which has a definitive end. Once I substituted all the balls for eggs, in "Egg Stock" this cyclical drive seemed comically appropriate.

There are a number of things that happen when you play a round of golf with a raw egg. It becomes nearly impossible to get it into the hole and it gets rather messy. The futility, but also the pleasure, of the game is accentuated in the slimy residue of each eggy explosion; sexual innuendos are not lost here. As opposed to the traditional "hole-in-one" the only way of reaching your goal, playing with an egg, is through lightly tapping or pushing it through the grass. The egg is not engineered to roll in a straight line and control is difficult. A large supply is thus warranted. Production and expenditure and the questions surrounding the ownership of the female reproductive potential became a central issue in the live performance of "Egg Stock". The public was given the opportunity to smash some of the eggs with a selection of irons on the University of Waterloo campus performance site, creating an interesting and awkward interplay between the performer and participant. Power, violation, intimacy, abundance and waste all became topics for discussion.

Although a public gesture, the work is also a personal confrontation with my own life/work choices. The challenges of pursuing both a family and art career were clearly laid out to me early on in my art education by several of my female professors. These conversations have been omnipresent in my mind over the past twenty years. The negotiation—and my choice not to start a family up to this point—is boiling close to the surface now that I am slowly edging closer to the end of my own egg supply. The direct physical engagement with this reality during the performance allowed me to take symbolic ownership of what is often seen as the societally entropic loss of reproductive potential (and thus sexual desirability) of the aging female. The sheer physical labour and exertion of hitting four hundred eggs in close succession over the course of

two hours is a physical testament to the agency, rather than the passivity, of women in the bedroom as well as in the labour force. This was both cathartic and empowering. The challenges in filming the performance-for-video were much different in nature from the live performance and the themes of the work came full circle as they were self-consciously played-out in real time. Although work on film allows for a certain amount of manipulation of time and space through the editing and the compositing process, the filming of several of the scenes meant that I was confronted with actual golfers on the golf course rather than by a public passing through a designated performance space. Along with other levels of physical discomfiture, I put up with comments by some elderly gentlemen who claimed that I was "the best thing to look at on the golf course they had seen in ages". Suffice it to say that their vociferous bemusement quickly became a baffled and discomfited silence when I amiably answered their query of what was in the large bags hanging off the back of the golf cart—"my eggs".

LOOKING FOR A GUIDE TO AN ALTERNA-TIVE

JOHANNES ZITS

I presented *Looking For Guides To An Alternative* during the 2013 North-by-North East (NXNE) festival in June 2013, reworking it for another performance in Buffalo, New York, in September 2013, and finally for *This Could be the Place* event in June 2014. The first incarnation of this piece was done in January 2013 at the 8th Encuentro Symposium in Sao Paulo, Brazil, organized by the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics.

For these performative actions, a long strip of cloth is woven out of the clothes I am wearing. Over the course of several days (usually for the duration of the particular event I perform at), a 20-40-foot piece is woven from the business suit I wear and sometimes from contributions from passers-by. These performances are as much about opening conversations, as they are about the object that is eventually woven. This work is a contemplation on materiality that confronts a symbol of power, the business suit, labour and invisibility of clothing production. Cutting up the garment, while I am wearing it, not only reveals the tailor's skill, care and time but also drastically changes how my authority and status is perceived over the extent of the event.


THIS COULD BE THE PLACE

Section Two

PRECARIOUS THEORY

Introduction:

PRECARIOUS THEORIES of LABOUR IN THE CULTURAL SPHERE

ALEKSANDRA KAMINSKA

As flexible, enterprising and self-sufficient, artists and cultural workers have become unofficial models of the neo-liberalized workforce. And yet there has been a surge of research attending to the dangerous and unsustainable labour conditions of this "model" capitalist employee.[1] Using the language of the "independent" rather than "precarious" worker has long misrepresented, glamourized and even made invisible the hazards of such work, masked by the misguided mantra that these workers are "doing what they love."[2] Lack of security and the normalization of (self-) exploitation are conditions that affect much of today's cultural workforce and go hand-in-hand with the steadfast commodification and instrumentalization of culture, art and knowledge, which has resulted in a constant pressure to produce work that has economic value and is thus "useful." Under these conditions the cultural worker has the "choice" to become a consummate entrepreneur, fashioning herself into a personal business by developing the ingenuity and tools to navigate the terrain of financial self-sustainability, and thus reflecting and embodying the expectations of the model neo-liberal worker. But as Michael Maranda shows, while these skills are allowing visual artists to thrive, despite or against all odds, this unheralded resourcefulness perpetuates rather than resolves the conditions of precarity. The essays included here offer ways of thinking about the labour of culture in today's economy, and propose inroads—from activism to metaphysics—to help break the cycles, expectations and standards of precarious conditions.

Jessica Wyman examines her experience as an arts-sector professional and relates it to the new category of "urban workers." Wyman frankly examines the contingencies and precariousness of her work: the financial necessity of doing work for pay outside her field; a working life defined by short-term contracts and a variety of unpaid obligations; the ongoing contradictions of developing an effective pedagogy to help up-and-coming cultural workers make their own way through a precarious environment. She concludes with reference to philosopher Karen Barad's theory of Agential Realism, drawing attention to how our action as agents is embedded in an intersubjective context that is immensely complex, and how any time we act on our interpretations of that context, we are necessarily privileging one way of seeing over others.

Indu Vashist's review of Basil AlZeri's *You Do What You Love Because You Do One Two, and More Than Two* tells a vivid story of a performance which highlights precisely what artists must do to make ends meet. AlZeri's work draws closer attention to the meaning of the mundane question, "What do you do?" which usually means, "what do you do for money?" but which, for practicing artists, is always overlain with the "existential" question of what one is doing, or is expected to do, as an artist.

In "Waging Culture: A Report on the Socio-Economic Status of Canadian Visual Artists," Maranda examines in detail the real financial conditions of the cultural worker. He reports on the findings of a survey he conducted on Canadian visual artists, the first of its kind since one conducted by Statistics Canada in 1993. Maranda quantifies the dire economies of artistic labour, noting that the typical artist is losing money in her practice. Showing the staggering, often absurd, discrepancy between revenue and expenses, and providing a variety of breakdowns on the kinds of funding available and received—including based on gender and age—the results paint a clear and troublesome picture of the feasibility—not to mention economic viability—of artistic work. And yet, despite these strained conditions Maranda notes that artists are succeeding, in so far as they are finding ways to pursue their practice, towing the line between creative ambitions and futures, and making choices based on their financial needs.

So how to think outside of the precarious models established by the current instrumentalization and commodification of art and culture? In "What is Tiqqun's Critical Metaphysics" Colin Campbell turns to the writings of the French collective of activists and authors Tiqqun, who argued that a resistance to Empire must be understood as a metaphysical struggle. Here Campbell proposes a philosophical and political line of inquiry that subverts precarity in the fields of culture, and art particularly, through a transcendence of the metaphysics of commodification, offering instead a new model based on hope, self-revaluation and a re-coding of art's value.

Finally, Kathy Kiloh turns our attention to the increasingly fragile conditions of the educational sector, both in terms of the precarious conditions of its workers and the disintegration of the criteria of knowledge and research. In "Teaching Lyotard's The *Postmodern Condition* in 2014: Performativity and Precariousness in the Post-Secondary Sector," Kiloh reviews the lessons of Lyotard's influential text 30 years after its publication. Specifically, she turns to its assessment of academic research and pedagogy as being increasingly "terrorized" by the criterion of performativity, whereby knowledge becomes legitimated only when it can be commodified, instrumentalized, optimized and deemed "useful" to society. While Lyotard warned against it, these expectations have become folded into the standards of today's neo-liberal higher-education "factories." To resist and escape this judgment of performativity in research and the production of knowledge, and to again put value on creative and imaginative thinking, Kiloh proposes Lyotard's turn to indeterminate judgments based on aesthetics and in particular the criterion of paralogy.

Ironically, the current winds of "innovation" and "entrepreneurialism" would have much to learn from the DIY ingenuity, resilience and resourcefulness of the cultural worker. But these skills must be understood in the context of precarity and "de-glamourized" alongside the real but often invisible labour that goes into the production of cultural work. Only by exposing the undesirable and dangerous conditions of this "model" worker can the unsustainable standards and expectations of labour in today's new economy begin to change.

OBJECT LESSONS & SELF-SUFFICIENCY: CONTINGENCY & PERFORMATIVITY, OR: BEING AN AGENT, BEING REAL

Jessica Wyman

All images courtesy the author

1

A personal, and partial, genealogy of contingency

My son, not yet 3, is well versed in a discourse of fortune. He knows that we are the luckiest people: we have a good place to live, we have lots of good food to eat, there are lots of people who we love and who love us and we have everything we need. He knows this by rote, if not (thankfully) through the experience of having needs unmet, though he probably has not yet surmised that in acknowledging these fortunes there is inference that not everyone has these things. Truly, we are the luckiest people.

I talk about art for a living. This is an extraordinary privilege. That I have done so on a contract basis for nearly 12 years does not diminish this privilege although I am deeply aware of my dependent status and that it does not mesh with perceptions of my professional security – not least since, though I am not tenured, neither am I sessional faculty, hopeful for dribbles of work every four months without any semblance of stability, unable to turn down any work for fear of a range of repercussions, from lack of income to jeopardizing future hiring opportunities. My status as contingent, though accurate, is at odds with my enmeshment in the institution that pays me, and at odds with how I identify myself professionally; it is one thing to be an independent critic or curator, both of which I have been, but awfully difficult to be an independent professor.

My life as an arts professional, prior to the attempt to make a life in the academy, was constructed with the expectation of contingency. More than twenty years ago, I set out to be an art critic in the knowledge that such an undertaking would not be a sustainable enterprise, despite then living in the UK at a moment when criticism was something seriously practiced and regarded. I wrote and published a lot, worked part-time on editorial staff at an art magazine and, because this certainly didn't provide enough money to live on in London, I trained as a fitness instructor and taught classes at local recreation centres (Fig.1). On my return to Canada in early 1997, I brought with me my experience as a published critic and my certificates in the Teaching of Exercise to Music (as they called it at the British certifying body) in various modalities. Guess which of those contributed more significantly to my income in subsequent years?

This is not meant to be a narrative of my work history which, probably like that of most of you, has had a few triumphs and a good number of hideous experiences. The intention, with whatever misgiving this may give rise to, is to indicate that although I have at times been economically marginal (to the point of not being able to afford transit fare to get to work), I have throughout remained sufficiently privileged to have had options. I decided to try my hand at a career in art criticism during my MA studies in England. I was broke working in commercial galleries and running other people's businesses in order to try having a life as a cultural worker, and the thing that kept me fed for many years was shouting at people and jumping up and down – which I could have done lots more of if I absolutely needed to. I also then had transferable skills which I could have used to shift into another kind of work had I wanted to do so and if my existence became truly marginal. My contingent working life, which was also often itinerant, was not always easy, but it was mostly quite far from the situation of my understanding, or at least my perception now, of those known as the Precariat, the social class in which people exist "without predictability or security, affecting material or psychological welfare as well as being a member of a Proletariat class of industrial workers who lack their own means of production and hence sell their labour to live. Specifically, it is applied to the condition of lack of job security."[1]

2

Habituation

I have wrestled with myself, metaphorically, while thinking through what I might offer in this text. I found myself at times drifting into territory that felt politically uncomfortable—not for its radicalism, but for its opposite: the prospect of a form of complacency or even complicity in the face of real labour inequality which is far from that which our current politicians and economics reporters are discussing. In not wanting to be a smug professional opining about the woes of other groups, I kept thinking reflectively about my own position, about my historical knowledge of cultural production and wondering whether the language that we now use to talk about contingency in the cultural sector is a political branding of something that has been at the centre of most cultural work for its entire history.

The patron saint of precarious workers and lives, San Precario (Saint Precarious) (Fig. 2), a trans person faux saint of indeterminate identity who emerged as a figure in Italy in 2004 in reaction to rampant abuses in that county of casual workers' rights. San Precario stands as an image of a certain type of precarious worker: but the saint image is one that almost could have been developed as a caricature based on Douglas Coupland's Generation X characterization of the McJob with the Generation Y cynicism about the impossibility of long-term prospects altogether. I like San Precario, and far better than the prayer of San Precario (Fig. 3) I like the manifesto, which seems less glib and far more rooted in supported and supportive action, a genuine positionality which is still complicated (as are all positionalities), but one

that is more self-reflective than the image of a fast food worker praying to the saint for protection from management, but also to management for protection.

Very much present in my current political and professional landscape is the category of the "urban worker", who is aligned with the precarious worker but is, as noted in the name, located specifically within the urban environment, and is thus sometimes, though not always, more consonant with the idea of the cultural worker, who may be precarious but also typically has a high degree of education, a wide social (and possibly intellectual) network and a desire to remain flexible in employment status (Fig. 4). Urban workers comprise a wide swath of people employed in cities, and may include everyone from graphic designers and taxi drivers, office cleaners and clerks, carpenters and contract teachers. "They are artists, personal support workers, entrepreneurs and cashiers,"[2] according to Andrew Cash, musician and my own Member of Parliament, who has put forward a National Urban Workers Strategy, which has a counterpart at the provincial level here in Ontario. This strategy advances the idea that precarious/urban workers would have access to social support mechanisms and better taxation systems, which would serve those who like the flexibility of contract work as well as those who work under those conditions by necessity. One of the cornerstones of such a strategy is the protection of interns as among unpaid workers. This is pivotal to fair treatment of a developing cultural class, alongside the enormous concerns that attend the unofficial sanctioning of abusive corporate labour practices that enshrine as necessity multiple, long-term unpaid internships to produce work that would otherwise be generated by paid employees.

3

Pedagogy

One of the ways in which this enters my professional landscape is that for the past two years I have been "teaching" a course at OCAD University called Community Practice (housed in the Art and Social Change program, no less) for which students are required to undertake a placement with a community organization (arts-focused, in one way or another) that has a curricular component and for which they receive a grade but no remuneration. This takes place in a cultural landscape in which access to organizations has long been prized as a way to enter a field (from apprenticeships to understudies to internships to volunteers) and also in an employment landscape in which abuse of unpaid workers has become entrenched such that many people (young, but not only young) ask to give their labour freely on a full-time basis for a period even of months or years for the prospect of an opportunity at an entry level down the road.

We have been very clear in the construction of the course that it not a back-door unpaid internship. There are explicit expectations around the number of hours that students spend in their pre-vetted placements, there is coursework, and there are clear mechanisms in place to protect students from a range of possible problematic outcomes. That said, I have also read the book *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy*[3], the key text in the field, published in 2011 by Ross Perlin, and I am well apprised of the many abuses that creative industries are party to in this regard; it's not just Disney and Rogers, though it is they too, who are responsible for this kind of unprotected employment proliferation. It is also design firms, publishing houses, production studios, and others.

I am also apprised of the current legal landscape with respect to workers' rights (though it is not entirely clear the degree to which students in curricular placements are considered workers) and what an instructor such as myself or even a placement supervisor is absolutely not allowed to suggest—including, notably, that undertaking such a position may lead to future job prospects.

I continue to wrestle with the multiple potential contradictions in overseeing such a program, which to date students have considered extremely beneficial, and the mechanics of which continue to be developed. One of the ways in which I wrestle with such a program is to make my concerns known to students in the course, to tell them about the rapidly changing landscape in which they as workers find themselves, to let them know about all of their rights, and to ask them how they imagine the elements of this landscape—political, ideological, economic, etc.—coming into play for them.

This is an element of the pedagogy I wish to mention, and it is one that I have embedded into the framework of the course itself. A significant component of our class conversation is attached to ideas of and frameworks for leaning: critical pedagogies, learning through participation, etc. Another component is heuristic on my part: I continue to reflect through my own academic, cultural and affective labour on what is it to produce cultural workers, on what it is to reproduce and also to challenge the contentious mechanisms through which I came to professional practice over a long period of time, and whether any of it goes beyond the circularity of conversations with my colleagues in the Experiential Learning office, who support the administrative side of an undertaking such as this one.

4

Being an Agent, Being Real

At this point I find myself at an awkward juncture. I have declared a certain kind of positionality with respect to the politics of labour, a politic which I inhabit and live and articulate but about which I remain unresolved. I cannot imagine a way in which so many of the contradictions inherent in my own life, let alone those in fostering future culture workers, might be resolved. I have spent my life living in and ultimately advocating for a kind of productive discomfort, and at this very moment I find myself in the uncomfortable position of not knowing quite how to wrap this up.

I will do so, however provisionally, by briefly turning to the theory of the physicist and philosopher Karen Barad and her theory of agential realism.[4] Barad has proposed that one of the central concepts to agential realism is the notion of intra-action, in which object and events emerge from intra-action, rather than preceding interactions. These things (phenomena) are produced by apparatuses and are material-discursive: they produce the conditions, the meanings and the material outcomes of each event, each of which is distinct from others. But because everything is entangled with everything else, all interpretive attempts make a cut between what is included and what is excluded. Although this cut is both temporary and discursive, it is a way of illustrating an ethics of inter-subjective engagement and gaining knowledge about something. Her notion of agency is not something that one has, but something that is a relationship that is continually produced and manifeseds through action (rather than through claim). Honestly, Barad's being a physicist and a professor of rhetoric means that much of her work is lost on me, and perhaps even this oversimplification is too confusing.

Relatedly, Barad also takes up the notion of performativity as embedded heavily in language, and argues that the primacy afforded language in the constitution of claims as well as actions is inappropriate. She worries that in such close attention to language, matter it-

self has been forgotten. Post-structuralism then, which sees the world as a series of linguistic and semiotic constructs, has got lost in its own navel, absorbed with the articulate relativism that proclaims and declaims without affect. Her larger claims are to think through ethical consequences of agentive action but also of both ontologies and epistemologies: how things are, and how we know, how to be.

Her work, such as I understand it, is about entanglement, and the messy, interlinked nature of all things. I like Barad's emphasis on matter mattering, on the insistence that language has its uses but that that agentive action is what constitutes an ethical position, that bringing things into being is a matter of physics but also of material discursivity. And so: I will not try too hard to construct through language a tidy ending to a series of messy anecdotes. I will not claim that, taken in total, these add up to something. I can claim only my own entanglement through this partial and interconnected set of material-discursive events as an agentive inhabiting with a view to an ethics of affective labour —and the privilege of the "flexicurity"[5] that I have managed, more or less well, to cobble together, and that I wish for all those who desire it.

You Do What You Love Because You Do One Two, and More Than Two – BASIL ALZERI

INDU VASHIST

Background photograph by Kyle Burton

It should be no surprise that unpaid interns abound in fields that are highly socially desirable, including fashion, media, and the arts. These industries have long been accustomed to masses of employees willing to work for social currency instead of actual wages, all in the name of love. Excluded from these opportunities, of course, is the overwhelming majority of the population: those who need to work for wages. This exclusion not only calcifies economic and professional immobility, but insulates these industries from the full diversity of voices society has to offer.[1]

In Toronto, one of the first questions that one encounters when meeting someone new is "What do you do?" The question usually means "what do you do for paid work?" This question becomes complicated when you do more than one thing or when what you love to do doesn't necessarily pay the bills. "What do you do?" becomes an existential question, it becomes a question of identity.

Basil AlZeri's *You Do What You Love Because You Do One Two, and More Than Two* in SAVAC's (South Asian Visual Arts Centre) Work It. draws attention to new economic landscape in which artists make work. AlZeri asked 101 artists within the Toronto arts community to donate objects from their non-art practice work lives. The project addresses the economic plight of artists rather literally. In this new economic landscape jobs are precarious regardless of education or previous experience: intellectual labourers bounce from sessional instructor contract to contract, arts administrators' work under looming budget cuts and austerity, many people willingly participate in the 'sharing economy' that undercut labour standards like minimum wage and workplace safety.

The display of objects—ranging from dirty disposable chopsticks to a mound of dirt; from shot glasses to a human molar; from an eyelash curler to a courier bag–make visible the networked economy of the arts community of Toronto. The call for participants for the project was disseminated among a loose community of artists and then amongst friends and collaborators of that community, creating a wider network. This project is an illustration of the ecology of a particular artist network and an investigation of its micro economy. For example, many of the artists are not just part of the same artistic milieu, but are also connected through their wage labour.

Many artists included in this show frequent the coffee shops and bars where some of the other artists work. The strength of the work is that it makes visible the ecology of a particular segment of Toronto's art scene.

The line between the public and private is crossed. The 'other' lives of the artists are exposed, an intimacy revealed. 101 artists were invited into AlZeri's home to drop off the objects. Coffee was drunk, snacks were consumed and emails were exchanged among people whose relationships varied from being strangers, to cursory public engagement within the art world, to deep friendship and collaboration. The project broke the silence about what artists must do to do what they love. It also opened a dialogue about the ethics of collaboration and ownership within the arts. Some artists voiced reservations about labouring for a work that is credited to another artist. Others expressed internal confusion about which object best captures their non-art practice work life.

The banalities of these paid jobs come through poignantly in the careful arrangement of these objects and with a sense of dark irony, these objects themselves become art. We always have, and do increasingly now, live in a world where expecting to get paid for doing what you love is seen as being 'spoilt' (for lack of a better term). AlZeri's project drives home two points. First, that art too is work. To restrict work to that of materialistic production as portrayed within various avatars of the capitalist ethos stands challenged in this piece. It shows us all the 'work', in the sense of time and energy, that goes into making art. It breaks the myth of art-making being a walk in the clouds, a stroll through paradise, or a self-centered internal journey–a privilege that only few fortunate persons are allowed. Second, it reclaims the age-old and oft-forgotten profound truth of the artist's responsibility to give a critical and creative voice at any given moment in human society. It brings to fore the realities of being forced to work in jobs that are under-paid and banal. It dryly presents that reality and adds to it the razzmatazz that is only possible through the vision of an artist who seeks to speak about realities, of his fellow artists, of people in general.

The twisted ironies embodied in this piece are its greatest strength. The nittigritties of the piece, much like the strained life of artists, are tedious yet fascinating. And together the objects create a kaleidoscope of patterns—not simply joyful, not simply banal, not only profound and not only sad. It is simple, complex, banal and profound all at the same time. *You Do What You Love Because You Do One Two, and More Than Two* stands as a testament to art practice in today's day and age–the bare essentials of it. It opens up the everyday lives of artists to the audience and brings them together in a piece that is as much a comment as it is an archive of this situation.

Work It

–

120 objects from 101 Artists representing their jobs outside their art practice, arranged by Basil AlZeri

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Checklist

001. Stefan Herda
Axe Throwing Instructor, Artist Assistant

002. Julius Manapul
Interior Design

003. Stephen F. Fisher
Gallery Technician

004. Lyndsey Cope
Office Manager

004. Liana Schmidt
Office Manage

004. Charlene K Lau
Administrative Assistant

004. Liz Knox
Administrative Assistant, Office Manager

005. Felix Kalmenson
Gardener

006. Johnson Ngo
Programmer

007. Ellyn Walker
Curator, Writer, Artist, Researcher, Gardener

008. AGabriella Solti
Arts Administrator

009. Vanessa Bee Rieger
Fine Art Framer

010. Bojana Videkanic
Teacher, Curator

011. Fareena Chanda
Designer, Researcher

012. Emily Hogg
BSc, MLA arch.

013. Charlie Murray
Carpenter, Designer, Contractor

014. Allison Row
Arts Admin

015. Daniel Frawley
Tree Planter

016. Iris Fraser
Gardener, Bike Mechanic, Builder

017. Manolo Lugo
Freelance Photographer, Digital Media Technician

018, 019 . Dennis Hale
TBD

020. Rodrigo Marti
Office Manager

021. Anni Spadafora
Barista, Odd Job Specialist

022. David Hanes
Always Assistant

023. Jessica Vallentin
Arts Admin

024. Rachel Ludlow
Server, Gallery Facilitator

025. Lili Huston-Herterich
Studio Manager

026. Daniel Frawley
Tree Planter

027. Dennis Hale
TBD

028. Khalid Al Nasser
Architect

029. Logan MacDonald
Print Traffic at TIFF

030. Lisa Folkerson
Barista, Art Administrator

031. Sean Martindale
Fine-Dinning Server

032. Julius Manapul
Interior Design

033, 034. Amy Wong
Personal Support Worker

035. Benjamin Edelberg
Food industry

036. Henry Chan
Accountant

037. soJin Chun
Head of Education and Community Outreach

038. Ali El-Darsa
Server

039. Nahed Mansour
Festival Director

040. Miles Collyer
Arts Adminstrator

041. Amy Lam
Support Worker

042. Alia Toor
Art Educator / School Teacher

043. Diane Borsato
Mother, Host

044. Dennis Hale
TBD

045, 046. Shauna Jean Doherty
Bartender, Freelance Curator

047. Alize Zorlutuna
Writing Facilitator, Advisor, Educator, Writer

048. Melissa Fisher
Contractor

049. Nathaniel Addison
Architect

050. Jess Dobkin
For Hire'

051. Mohammad Rezaei
Server, Assistant

052, 053. Rita Kamacho
Works non Work

054. Sebastian Butt
Framer, Carpenter, Artist Assistant, Casual Labourer

055. David Khang
Dentist

056. Anthony Cooper
Bartender

057. Miles Stemp
Technician, Tour de France Cyclist

058. Wallis Cheuns
Caterer, Server

059. James Gardenier
Bartender, Art Installer

060. Laura Simon
Administrator

061. Steven McLeod
Programmer, Teacher

062. Ryan Clayton
Bank Teller

063. Iris Fraser
Gardener, Bike Mechanic, Builder

064. Golboo Amani
Lighting Consultant

065, 066. Meghan McKnight
Bartender

067. Janis Demkiw
Data Coordinator

068. Cara Spooner
Arts Admin

069, 070. Julian Calleros
Bartender, Server, Local Café Owner

071. Katie Bethune Leamen
Sessional Instructor

072. Flavio Trevisan
Exhibition designer

073. Julia Dickens
Costumer Service Agent, Education Workshop facilitator, Educator

074. Miles Forrester
Unemployed ATM, Peterpanning

075, 076. Julius Manapul
Interior Design

077. Jess Dobkin
For Hire'

078. Joshua Vettivelu
Instructor, Installer, Server (fired), Costumer Service (also fired)

079. Zoë Solomon
Line Cook

080. Gina Badger
Editor

081. Amber Landgraff
Gallery director, Independent Curator, Writer

082. Julius Manapul
Interior Design

083. Sook-Yin Lee
Radio and TV Broadcaster. Host and coproducer of DNTO on CBC Radio 1

084. Johanna Householder
Teacher, Board Member

085. Julian Calleros
Bartender, Server, Local Café Owner

086. Radiodress
Sex Worker (sub/dom)

087, 088. Simlâ Civelek
Art model

089. Atanas Bozdarov
Graphic Designer

090. Francisco-Fernando Granados
University Instructor

091. Chris Boni
Freelance Construction, Painting, Videographer

092. Irene Loughlin
Art Teacher, Arts Administrator, Factory Girl, Server

093. Mark MacKinnon
Bus Driver

094. Christine Walker
Art teacher

095. Mikiki
HIV/AIDS Harm Reduction Outreach Educator

096. Maggie Flynn
Server

097. Julius Manapul
Interior Design

098. Kate Barry
Creative Arts Consultant, Project Coordinator, Curator, Writer, Educator, Tutor, Childcare Provider

099. Marisa Hoicka
Teacher, General Contract

100. Grant Heaps
Wardrobe Coordinator

101. Rehab Nazzal
Photography Work

102. Jenal Dolson
Fundraiser, Waitress, Butler

103. Anuta Skrypka
Server, Customer Service Assistant, Workshop Organizer

104. Alexis Mitchell
PHD Student, Teaching Assistant, Researcher, Grant Writer, Video Editor

105. Eugenio Salas
Business Owner

106. Travis Freeman
Operations Coordinator

107. Anonymous
Court Interpreter

108. Mohammad Rezaei
Server, Assistant

109. Alana Bartol
Arts Administrator, Program Co-ordinator, Educator at Drop-in Youth Centres and Public Schools

110. Coman Poon
Self Employed

111. Keith Cole
Penis, Too Much Coffee, Rent Boys, Prince Harry, Photocopies

112. Aliya Pabani
Arts Adminstrator, Designer, Communications Director

113. Rea McNamara
Writer, Curator

114. Jessica Karuhanga
Barista, Server, Salsa Dancer

115, 116. Bishara Mohammed
Project Coordinator, Art Adminstrator

117. Haley Uyeda
Programming Coordinator

118. Daniel Frawley
Tree Planter

119. Mohammad Rezaei
Server, Assistant

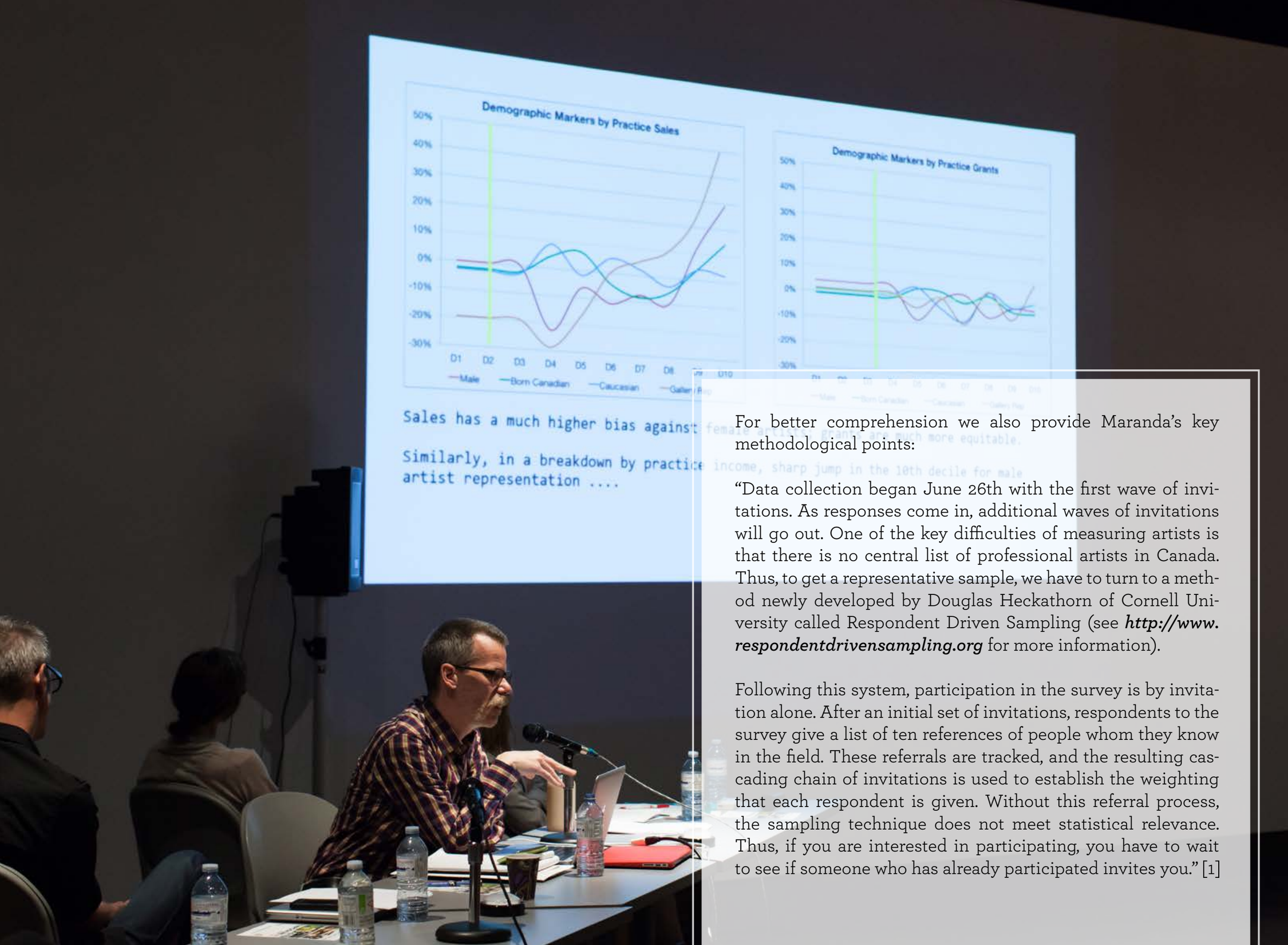
120. Amy Wong
Personal Support Worker

WAGING CULTURE

MICHAEL MARANDA

Waging Culture is a multi-year study of socio-economic conditions of professional artists in Canada. The first *Waging Culture* survey was undertaken in 2008, and covered the 2007 calendar year. It was organized by Michael Maranda and was the most comprehensive study of artists in Canada since the Statistics Canada *Canadian Cultural Labour Force* survey of 1993.

Five years later Maranda returned to the work conducted in 2007 to gauge how artists are doing now (2012), and compare their situation to five years before. While the survey has retained many of the important questions regarding demographics and finances, the extended section on career benchmarks has been excised to streamline data collection. The survey data has been collected now, and Maranda is in the process of writing a comprehensive report of the findings of the new survey, as well as, in comparison to the one done five years ago. What we have here in the precarity issue of KAPSULA is a preliminary report presented by Maranda at *This Could be the Place* in June 2014. He has kindly agreed to share it with us as a document which speaks to many of the issues raised by other presenters at the symposium. You will find both a link to his preliminary 2012 report, but also to the 2007 full report on the website of the Art Gallery of York University.



For better comprehension we also provide Maranda's key methodological points:

"Data collection began June 26th with the first wave of invitations. As responses come in, additional waves of invitations will go out. One of the key difficulties of measuring artists is that there is no central list of professional artists in Canada. Thus, to get a representative sample, we have to turn to a method newly developed by Douglas Heckathorn of Cornell University called Respondent Driven Sampling (see ***http://www.respondentdrivensampling.org*** for more information).

Following this system, participation in the survey is by invitation alone. After an initial set of invitations, respondents to the survey give a list of ten references of people whom they know in the field. These referrals are tracked, and the resulting cascading chain of invitations is used to establish the weighting that each respondent is given. Without this referral process, the sampling technique does not meet statistical relevance. Thus, if you are interested in participating, you have to wait to see if someone who has already participated invites you." [1]

Colin Campbell

And the new, the critical metaphysics, which should take account of the stupid situation in which these had hitherto found themselves who saw in apodeictic judgments eternal truths, had a great task to set herself: to get rid at all costs of apodeictic judgments, knowing them for false.[1]

There are places on earth where the word 'metaphysics' itself is hunted down as a heresy.[2]

Here we come across a tremendous fact: namely, that a language, any language, has at its bottom certain metaphysics, which ascribes, consciously or unconsciously, some sort of structure to this world.[3]

The higher and lower abstractions seem structurally and neurologically, as well as functionally, interconnected in a cyclic chain, and so can never be entirely divided. A language—any language—involves undefined terms which, with the structure of the given language, express the silent and unconscious metaphysics underlying it.[4]

In the impartiality of scientific language, that which is powerless has wholly lost any means of expression, and only the given finds its neutral sign. This kind of neutrality is more metaphysical than metaphysics.[5]

For beneath the Cassandra-voice of reason there is another smug and smiling voice in us, which whispers into our ear the gentle lie that we shall never die, and that tomorrow will be like yesterday. It is time we learnt to distrust that voice.[6]

If we were to approximate our metaphysical terminology more closely to Hopian terms, we should probably speak of the subjective realm as the realm of HOPE or HOPING. Every language contains terms that have come to attain cosmic scope of reference, that crystallize in themselves the basic postulates of an unformulated philosophy, in which is couched the thought of a people, a culture, a civilization, even of an era. Such are our words 'reality, substance, matter, cause,' and as we have seen 'space, time, past, present, future.' Such a term in Hopi is the word most often translated 'hope'—*tunátya*—'it is in the action of hoping, it hopes, it is hoped for, it thinks or is thought of with hope,' etc. Most metaphysical words in Hopi are verbs, not nouns as in European languages.[7]

My final prayer: O my body, make of me always a man who questions.[8]

...no one disputes the principle of this sovereignty of servitude.[9]

The word metaphysics here is not of course used in the abusive sense to mean mere empty

vapouring. It is used in its proper sense of very general conceptual enquiry, covering such central topics as the relation of mind and matter, free will and necessity, meaning, truth and the possibility of knowledge, all in an attempt... to make sense of the world as a whole. In this sense, naturally, views like materialism and empiricism, and also skeptical enquiries like those of Hume, Ayer and Popper are themselves part of metaphysics just as much as what they oppose or enquire into.[10]

Virtuality is not about living in an immaterial realm of information, but about the cultural perception that material objects are interpenetrated with informational patterns.[11]

If you think that aesthetic education is for the imagination to be trained for epistemological performance, in order to judge between issues and people in a democracy you need to be able to do this epistemological construction rather than be taken in by the hyperreal as if it were unmediated.... DuBois writes that "the Negro" needs food, shelter, and clothing, but at the same time he needs to learn how to communicate with the stars. Now, that extremely metaphoric phrase—a completed education as "communicating with the stars"—has something like a relationship with what I'm calling aesthetic education. It is such an epistemological transformation that can begin to imagine that democratic judgment is not identical with justified selfinterest in being oppressed, which is the focus of human rights.[12]

Critical metaphysics is in everybody's guts. Whatever we might protest about this, there is no doubt that *people* will try to say we were the inventors of Critical Metaphysics, so as to hide the fact that it existed *already* before finding its formulation.[13]

1. zombie metaphysics

What is "critical metaphysics," and why or how has it come to be "in everybody's guts"? What makes the collective-writers of Tiqqun say with such confidence that something we would associate with philosophers like Theodor Adorno or Gayatri Spivak might be directly, even physically, palpable to "everybody"?

Tiqqun's argument might seem all the more strange, given that they seem to insist that metaphysics is finished:

> The essence of the economy... is THE NEGATION OF METAPHYSICS... the negation of that which makes sense of the world, of the imperceptible appearing within the perceptible (2).

The triumph of global capitalism, say Tiqqun, is more than an issue for political economists. It has coincided with the trivialization, commercialization, and ultimately the trashing of what for thousands of years has stood among the foremost human concerns: the meaning of the universe, the possibility of an experience of the world as interrelated whole including us, in short, the whole life of 'spirit.' We have lost "that which makes sense of the world":

> Never has the sentiment of foreignness been so pregnant as in the face of the abstract productions of a world that had intended to bury it under the immense, unquestionable opulence of its accumulated commodities. Places, clothes, words and architecture, faces, acts, gazes and loves are nothing anymore but the terrible masks invented by one and the same absence to put on in order to approach us... All the things of this world live on in a perceptible state of exile. They are the victims of a faint and constant loss of being (3).

However it turns out that the evacuation of any publicly acknowledged spiritual meaning in life has not really or actually made metaphysics 'go away.' On that contrary, "this modernity, which claims to be free of mystery and thought it had liquidated metaphysics, has instead realized it" (3):

> Commodity metaphysics is not just one more metaphysics among others; it is *the* metaphysics, that denies all metaphysics and above all denies itself as metaphysics. This is also why it is, among all, the *most null* of metaphysics, the one that would sincerely like to pass itself off as simple physicality (12).

Metaphysics is no longer only the concern of philosophers in ivory towers, as was traditionally presumed; the music of the spheres has been brought down to earth, in the con-

stant play of light and sound, in the information available to our ears and eyes and at our fingertips:

> In the Spectacle, the metaphysical character of existence is taken as an obvious, central fact: the world has become *visibly* metaphysical.... There, the light has solidified, the incomprehensible mode of disclosure that *produces* all being-there has become *incarnate* as such.... That which makes things visible itself becomes visible there (18).

Metaphysics is the feeling in the guts induced by the fear of humiliating oneself in an open social network: exposed to the world in the privacy of one's home-office. The 'immaterial'—that is, the plural *relations* secured by invisible energies—has come to play a directly practical role in our everyday experience of the world. Nowadays, as Spivak teaches, citing W. E. Dubois, we must all learn to 'communicate with the stars.'

Economism and utilitarianism have killed traditional metaphysics, but like a genie or a demon of myth, metaphysics appears to have returned from the dead, invisible and yet palpable to everyone. For Tiqqun, the most important and notable aspect of this metaphysical experience is its intensity of *fear and hope*:

> Let's suppose that the object that spreads such a significant terror everywhere, which *people* can deny the effective action of only so long as it is unnamed, is Critical Metaphysics.... The trained eye sees nothing in all this to lend credit to some eternal victory of the commodity and its empire of confusion; rather it sees the intensity of the generalized state of patient expectation, a messianic waiting for the catastrophe, for the *moment of truth* which will finally put an end to the unreality of a world of lies. On this point as on many others, it is not superfluous to be Sabbatean (5).

That this intensity is messianic in character is of course not only evident in their invocation of Isaac Luria and Sabbatai Zevi, but also in the name they have given to their anonymous collective, Tiqqun or Tikkun, referring to the ancient Judaic faith-concept of the possible healing of this shattered world. Tiqqun aim to develop a new metaphysics of hope to supercede the prevailing commercial metaphysics.

Like Guy Debord and many others, Tiqqun use the term 'Spectacle' to refer to the whole congress of imagery of hope and fear produced by the apparently non-metaphysical business of selling the ensemble of products filed under 'culture.' In the shadow of this immense commercialism we are continuously alienated from ourselves, continuously alienat*ing* ourselves from ourselves. Nearly everyone has direct technological connection to some aspect of the Spectacle; many carry and use mobile devices in all waking hours. This is true from the top to the the bottom of the world income scales, from hyper-speed stock markets to the South Asian service-call-centers, from the globe-trotting CEO to the Filipina non-citizen care worker organizing her relations with multiple employers on a mobile device, thousands of miles from her own family. Subjected to the commercial spectacle, Tiqqun are saying that not just critical theorists but *people in general* should "communicate with the stars" and become metaphysicians. Metaphysics is, "already *everywhere*, in the state of emptiness behind suffering, in the denial behind entertainment, in the motives behind consumption, or, obviously, anxiety" (1).

Immersed in the Spectacle, Tiqqun say that we are becoming generally 'enlightened' about Desire. 'Enlightenment' refers specifically to the separation opened between the human spirit and a thing or things it observes in the 'light' of supposed objectivity. With regard to matters of Desire in particular, we engage in ever more 'enlightened' and incessant verbal activity, all of this speaking what Michel Foucault called the 'truth of sex,' wherein we become completely alienated from 'bodies and pleasures.' However, precisely with this detached gaze comes simultaneously the possibility of *concretely comprehending the body's inherent metaphysical dimension* as itself already mind—the concrete complexity of the relations between 'feeling' and 'thinking' obscured by traditional western metaphysics.

To experience the body and its wants as mere physicality, as a 'meat-puppet,' completely

without traditional 'spiritual' content, and to do so with an attitude of planned or calculated performance, is in itself already a deeply metaphysical experience to which anyone, not just the Foucaultian academic, can attest. To pray, citing Frantz Fanon, that our bodies will make questioners of us is to raise that mute experience to the level of a counter-discourse – a new metaphysics.

For Tiqqun the lived, performed 'meat-puppet-body' calls into question ancient and 'presumed-innocent' institutions of sexual difference and normality. This experience is already leading to an immense flowering of diversity and human creativity, which is generally still coded as 'perversion' even where more euphemistic and liberal language is employed. The plural and creative nature of human sexual experience, long suppressed in western history by religious and practical discourses of control, is there for all to see, on the screens and right at our fingertips.

However, at present this experience occurs for most people not as active, participatory questioning but rather as fetishistic resentment of, and attachment to, the ever more phantasmagoric productions of the Spectacle. Rather than issuing forth as a movement to bring an end to the domination of the multitudes by elite conformism, metaphysics is lampooned in the Spectacle, which sells us the severed pure physicality of things and disavows and conceals its metaphysical nature:

> Underneath this relationship is a process of reunification between the perceptible and the superperceptible, meaning and life, the mode of disclosure and the object revealed; that implies commodity society's complete disavowal of its very basis, but at the same time such reunification only operates on the terrain of their separation itself. It follows that this pseudo-reconciliation is not a passage of these terms through each other and onto a superior level, but rather their suppression pure and simple, which brings them together not as united, but as separate (17).

The metaphysical nature of desire should be fully evident in the absurd scope of sexual perversions the internet documents like some out-of-control automated Kinsey report. Nearly anyone today can witness the apparently limitless range of plausible objects for human libido. And yet the notion of a 'natural' western heteronormative desire rooted in genetics lives on as kind of zombie eugenics. What is needed, say Tiqqun, is for this metaphysics already in our guts to become *active and conscious* in our thinking.

2. 'idealism as rage': young-girl and bloom

The problem is that this critical metaphysics that is in our guts is at present feels like little more than a knot of pain. Who but the chosen few would *never* resent the subjection of the lived body to the insidious standards of comparison and judgment on a scale that is topped by Kim Kardashian's 'post-racial' posterior? In the face of real degradation like this, the very mention of a 'new relation between concept and thing' throws us to a high level of abstraction, in apparent detachment from our direct experience. The very word 'metaphysics' sounds either stodgy and museum-like, or like the demented ravings of yesterday's LSD visionaries: like the brown acid, 'not specifically too good.' It seems to have little to do with anything we might be able to 'feel' or 'think' coherently about in the daily grind.

Nevertheless the problem of the relation between concept and thing is directly experienced in our guts as the contrast between idealized images of bodies—perpetually gazing at us in lurid hyperreal technicolour—and the lived experience of being 'in the skin.' This is the suffering of the character Tiqqun call 'Bloom,' the spaced-out, underemployed, 'useless' person of indeterminate gender that is the under-side of normal subjectivity today:

> Bloom's own body appears like a foreign jurisdiction that he inhabits against his will. By buying its further survival at the price of putting the metaphysical *to work for it*, commodity domination has robbed this terrain of its neutrality, which alone guaranteed its victorious advancement; it made metaphysics into a *material force* (20).

Metaphysics *is* this hypermediated suffering habitually and compulsively denied by the Young-girl, the other side, the top-side to Bloom.[14] Metaphysics is the experience of a process of *continuous self-production* in the absence of any perceptible motive other than the looming demand of the collective. Metaphysics today is, more than ever, "Moloch, whose blood is electricity and banks." [15]

This is why merely mentioning its abstract presence, merely invoking a problem of this kind as involving abstract thinking, often evokes immediate reactions of impatience, mild contempt, or disgust. The nearly automatic disgust-and-projection reaction of the Young-girl is what calls up the element of violence that marks Tiqqun's language and that helps to explain the violent reactions of some critics who have touched their literary flames. Tiqqun are mad for metaphysics, and their critical metaphysics is in fact little more than an abstract image of the rage produced by bio-political normativity:

> Critical metaphysics manifests itself to anyone that decides to live with their eyes open, which only requires a particular stubbornness that *people* usually pass off as madness. Because Critical Metaphysics is rage to such a degree of accumulation that it becomes a *viewpoint*. But such a viewpoint, one that has recovered from all the beguilements of modernity, does not know the world as distinct from itself (7).

Rage is the subject only because rage, derived from fear, is what is behind the incessant activity of self-evaluation and self-production that is compelled by the Young-girl within. Tiqqun will fight fire with literary fire.

It is with a view to interrupting *an unconscious activity of subjective self-production* that Tiqqun resort to violent, even murderous imagery:

> All those who would accommodate themselves to a society that accommodates itself so well to inhumanity, all those for whom it already sits well to give the alms of their indifference to their own suffering and that of their peers, all those who speak of disaster as if it were simply another new market with promising prospects—are not our brothers. Rather we would find their deaths highly desirable. And we'd certainly not blame them for not devoting themselves to Critical Metaphysics, which, as a mere discourse, could constitute a particular social object to decide to take up, but for *refusing* to see the truth in it, which, being everywhere, is beyond any particular decision (9)

I think we would be wrong to interpret Tiqqun's images as having murderous intent, any more than an artist dramatizing assault or murder in performance has truly murderous intent. Tiqqun's aim in all their exaggerated language (*Theory of the Young-girl*, for example, is really the bastard child of 1970s Italian radical feminist theory and women's beauty magazines) is to stun the Young-girl—not a person, let us be reminded, but a psychic mechanism, just as much or more prevalent in self-identified males as females—into temporary silence.

In the momentary silence created by imagery like the references to the 'Young-girl's ass,' to someone having 'the personality of a tampon,' etc., Tiqqun want Bloom's subaltern introversion to catalyze itself into conceptual insight. In "What is Critical Metaphysics?" they provide an outline of a new metaphysics, a new relation between concept and thing, which is practiced 'on the daily':

> ...thinking is not a duty of man, but his essential necessity, the non-fulfillment of which is suffering—that is, a contradiction between his possibilities and his existence. Human beings *physically* wilt when they negate their metaphysical dimension (8).

3. the togetherness of togetherness & separateness

In standard North American English, Tiqqun would be asking, 'what is the relation between what we *say* a thing is, and what it really is'? We generally know very well that a thing is not the word we use to describe it. We might say that language is a map of experience, not the whole experience itself.

However, human social agreements rest on the fact that we habitually, in speaking to one another, use words to indicate that we speak responsibly and authoritatively about something. 'That *is* a load bearing column, it *is* made of eight tons of hardened steel, *it will not collapse*.' 'This *is* what justice means.' 'This is what it means to be a man.' We know the word 'steel' is not itself the steel. We know the word 'man' is not the person identified as male. But what is concealed by the practical performance of our language 'in the moment' is that we are *speaking as if* the words we *were* using were the things.

Traditional metaphysics has gotten caught up because it tries to maintain that the concept of a thing, 'what we *say* it is,' should be identical to that thing. Like the mad Emperor of Jorge Borge's legend, it wants a map that would contain every aspect of the territory. Grandfather Aristotle himself recognized that at times a flexible 'rule of Lesbos' needed to be employed in respect of the inability of any written words to entirely capture the variety of possible human experiences. At the same time, he insisted that identity and symmetry of word and thing were the ultimate metaphysical ideals. This contradiction and the general problem of "incongruence between concept and reality" has led to two-thousand years of arguments and paradoxes.[16]

How then can we account practically, not merely theoretically, for the fact that words are not things, and that to be responsible is to maintain openness to possible experiences, while in situations of violence or intimacy and in other crucial performances, we must accept the words 'at face value' as the things they say they are? What do we make, for example, of Rebecca Belmore speaking of her 'unquestionable' Indian-ness?

I take off my shoes, stand, and momentarily imagine how it must have been before Europeans made it theirs. My physical being becomes conceptually grounded, my female Indian-ness unquestionable. From this place I can address what is immediate and know that I am one in a long line of Indigenous artists.[17]

Surely we take this statement 'at face value' and not as 'merely a map.' What to do?

Tiqqun's critical metaphysics solves the problem 'just like that:'

The world is a metaphysics, that is: the way it presents itself first of all, its supposed objective neutrality, its simple material structure, are already part of a certain metaphysical interpretation that constitutes it. The world is always the product of a mode of disclosure that brings things out into presence (10).

What we experience is not 'things' alongside our words and ideas about them. Rather, what we see in things is always also our idea of them, already our conceptualizing view. The objects we see, we see the way we do because we have labeled them in the way we have:

> Like a disease is obviously not merely the sum of its symptoms, the world is manifestly not the sum of its objects, of "the case at hand," nor of its phenomena, but rather it is a characteristic of humanity itself. The world exists as a world only for mankind (9-10).

When Belmore speaks of her female Indian-ness as 'unquestionable' I sense that she is not imposing words on lived experience in the mode of traditional Western science. She is not, I think, making one more claim to be added to the annals of universal phallogocentric power-knowledge. Rather she is drawing and performing out of her body and her artworks *a much more adequate map* of her experience than the one that prevails with regard to First Nations people and First Nations women.[18] We can affirm and perform the better adequacy of this map as such without forgetting the unique conditions of its creation.[19]

The metaphysical is not 'another world' or 'a world behind the world' which will one day be revealed to us. Rather a metaphysical structure frames our view and experience of things *at all times*:

> The metaphysical is not the simple negation of the physical; it is symmetrically, also its foundation and its dialectical transcendence. The prefix meta-, which means both "with" and 'beyond,' does not imply a disjunction, but an *Aufehebung* in the Hegelian sense. Hence metaphysics is in no way something abstract, because it is the basis for all concreteness; it's what

> stands behind the physical and makes it possible.... Metaphysics is thus the simple fact that the mode of disclosure and the object disclosed in a primordial sense remain "the same thing" (11).

Language, in this view, is not a set of counters that represent things. Rather, it represents the dynamic but always incomplete 'real-time' process of mapping experience. Language begins as the attempt to represent something verbally; but it ends invariably, if it succeeds, in attempting to make up for the false separation introduced when we presumed to label a 'thing' with a word. "Language is not a system of symbols, but the promise of reconciliation between words and things" (13).

The word is not the thing, and there is always more in the thing that what any word can say. And yet we cannot forget that our everyday view of the thing is almost invariably shaped behind our backs by language, especially in everyday social existence.

4. the 'imaginary party'

As practitioners of critical metaphysics, Tiqqun insist that we can form new solidarities against the Spectacle:

> By starting from nothingness, Critical Metaphysics creates a truer, more compact, and looser fullness than the apparent fullness of the Spectacle: the fullness of dereliction, the absoluteness of disaster. In revealing to human suffering its political significance, it abolishes it as such and makes it the harbinger of a superior state (24).

To oppose the Spectacle, Tiqqun suggest that we oppose '*people*' and form the 'imaginary party':

> We must everywhere contradict people. And that's what we're working on, according to our own penchants, when we reveal the Young-girl as a political coercion apparatus, the economy as a ritual of black magic, Bloom as a criminal saintliness, the Imaginary Party as the bearer of a hostility as invisible as it is absolute.... It is above all about bringing out, in everything people say, in everything people do, and in everything people see, its natural unreality factor. This world will cease to be so monstrous when it ceases to be taken for granted (22).

It is on this note that I would like to conclude not so much with criticism but a problem of translation. What, for example, do Tiqqun mean by *people* in italics as opposed to 'people' or 'the people'? While it is clear enough that, according to Tiqqun, the suffering induced by metaphysics can make it very difficult to share with others, it is not clear how their literary combination of Lurianic Kabbalah with German Idealism [20] will help convey perspectives of the new metaphysics to the immense variety of people around us, all these people who feel what 'everybody knows' in their guts.

We need to translate critical metaphysics into other terms and practices to share it with other people. This seems to be a problem that has recurrently confronted English-speaking North Americans teaching certain subversive strains of continental theory. The issue is how do we *share* this practice of critical metaphysics with the immense variety of people (not *people*) around us, not all of them familiar with Hegel's logic or Tiqqun's kind of literary language? [21] How can we think not only in terms of abstract research but in terms of performances aimed at a general audience, on a street in Vancouver, for example?

This seems to me to be an unavoidable task to be performed in order for the 'imaginary party' to become more than some romantic twilight vanguard, for it to become or feed into a more broadly popular, truly emancipatory activity. Perhaps some of the critical vitriol that has been launched against Tiqqun stems at heart from the sense of how little they provide in the way of explicit practical insight into how critical metaphysics might become something of enough interest to people (not people) to make a significant social and political movement.

So to conclude, rather than parroting Tiqqun's writing I would like to begin with some working proposals arising from the 'general idea' of their critical metaphysics:

1) that making *art* can be a way of doing critical metaphysics, in the sense that "art" could be defined as the presentation of an object

or phenomenon whose normal metaphysical framing has been changed or 'damaged' in some way. Art distinguishes itself from a 'normal' object by interrupting the habitual perceptual-labeling process and normal presuppositions. Sometimes a urinal is just a urinal—but if it's Duchamp's then its metaphysics subject it and us to an inversion of values. We are wrong to believe this inversion is "purely subjective." "Art" is the physical behaving as if it were the metaphysical, it is something physical whose inherent metaphysical qualities are made evident in the process of exhibition. It might even be said for this reason that performance art and its various new-media cognates are the privileged or general scene of art in our time.

2) that while money is not like art in many respects, it is like it in the sense of its metaphysical quality. Indeed, money and art are similar in that they can both produce a re-framing of a prior sense of value. Of course, the difference is that while art opens an in-principle limitless field of possibility for recoding of value, money does precisely the opposite: it reduces any possible metaphysical difference to one invariant quantitative scale. The Young-girl dominates, and Bloom is dominated, by the way the Spectacle confuses these matters.

3) that apart from making art we can work toward the Imaginary Party in our work and elsewhere by subtle attention to the way language, including the beguiling image-language of the Spectacle, continually enframes our sense of human possibilities and frameworks of potential solidarity. Every daily act of evaluation is a metaphysical act—certainly while not all of them require deep critical attention, some of them do.[22] This extends to and beyond the critique of sexism and racism, in three particular senses:

(a) we are learning to see, where we have so far seen Bloom, the *aliveness* of people (not *people*) and their absolute uniqueness, both in and beyond our verbal categories and comparisons...

(b) we are learning to see every unique person as not only *in* a context but as a manifestation *of* that context. This includes but is not restricted to ethnic tradition and deep historical factors such as colonialism. Individual uniqueness is a unique manifestation of this tradition-history-family-nation. This is why in relation to First Nations peoples of North America we might speak of a Nation-to-Nation dialogue rather than 'fee simple' negotiations with isolated bands or economic individuals...

(c) we are learning to see every unique person-context as having their given characteristics, relating to me (or others) well or not, etc., in the way they do AT THIS TIME. We recognize that the sense of metaphysical 'sameness' of things and people is a fiction of language. Things, people contexts are always changing, day-to-day, week-to-week, etc. Tiqqun's messianic sense of time involves continuous awareness of change in the moment, as well as opening the prospect of the possibilities of more radical change to come. We recognize that the fear evoked by the military-edutainment-criminal justice complex is only the insecure container of a hope whose depth has been underestimated time and time again.

KATHY KILOH

Some Reflections on Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*

Several times in the last year, I've taught Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* [1] in an upper-level undergraduate course on modernism and postmodernism. The text bears a double reputation of questionable scholarship and wide structural influence within the post-secondary sector. In thinking about how to approach the topic of precarious labour within the post-secondary sector, I repeatedly returned to this exploratory text that characterizes the climate of knowledge production and management in the late nineteen-seventies and also makes predictions about the future of academic labour: predictions the plausibility of which we are now in a historical position to judge.

The precarity of labour as it is discussed in *The Postmodern Condition* has a double meaning; academic labour is precarious because its social function and the verifiability of its fruits are in doubt, and because employment practices within academia rely overwhelmingly on temporary contracts and the influence of what Lyotard refers to as "the exercise of terror."[2] Ultimately, I will conclude that Lyotard's theory of knowledge production in the postmodern age proves to be unsatisfactory for us, in that while he is able to describe the end of the era of the professoriate, he does not explicitly describe the more radical implications of this transformation. Written almost 20 years later, Mauricio Lazarrato's theory of immaterial labour is laid out in a somewhat more reflective text, and, likely because it benefits from hindsight, is much more explicit in its claims for the liberatory potential found within the age of computerized communications.

Lyotard famously declares in *The Postmodern Condition* that we no longer have recourse to metanarratives in order to legitimate the truth claims we present based on our research—in other words, the knowledge that we produce. That is to say that we no longer naively believe in the ideals of the Enlightenment: that human progress is a speculative movement towards the totalization of knowledge or toward the total emancipation of humanity from the clutches of necessity. Or, as Lyotard has it, we no longer believe in the claim that humanity is "the hero of liberty."[3] Why is this so? Because, we have experienced a crisis of metaphysics that has resulted in a dispersal of knowledge over numerous particular fields that no longer participate in the universal project of the Enlightenment. This dispersal is spurred on by advances in technology driven by the commoditization of knowledge within a computerized society dominated by capitalism.

But why has this legitimation of knowledge through metanarratives been necessary for academic research and teaching within a modern framework? Modernism distrusts "narrative" knowledge as unverifiable because it consists of statements that are not limited to denotative description, and therefore can't be legitimated through scientific experimentation. In the Enlightenment project of disenchantment, science is split from narrative. But while science can legitimate its own denotative statements, it can't legitimate science itself, and this is why (paradoxically) it requires access to a legitimating narrative.

With the death of modern metanarratives, each particular field within the sciences becomes isolated within its own discursive construction—and conforms to its own language games.[4] There are multiple language games, and each one is defined by its own set of consensual rules. That is to say, that the rules of the game are set within a contract agreed upon by the players. Within this reorganization of research into indepe*ndent fields, each with their own la*nguage games, Lyotard determines that there are "two kinds of 'progress' possible as a consequence of postmodern knowledge production: one corresponds to a new move (a new argument) within the established rules; the other to the invention of new rules, in other words, a change to a new game."[5] But without recourse to metanarratives, there is a lack of communication between these discourses or disciplines; we exist in a postmodern dispersal of difference and multiplicity, which makes the creation of new games very challenging.

Exhibiting a debt to Nietzsche, Lyotard shows that the legitimation of knowledge is also a function of power. It will be important to determine who decides what knowledge is, and, within the modern and the postmodern perspective, those who make these decisions are those with access to the wealth that generates the technological apparatus that facilitates research. Lyotard argues that the "decision makers"[6] (and by this ambiguous term, I surmise that we take Lyotard to mean administrators both at the level of particular universities, multi-national corporations and government ministries, given that he has determined the postmodern legitimation of knowledge to be a function of government) have determined that each of these particular fields of research are commensurable – comparable, and to a large extent, equivalent to one another. In other words, the "decision makers" assume that the problem of the multiplicity and incommunicability of language games can be solved by simply ignoring their differences.[7]

Lyotard considers this to be a grave mistake of instrumental rationality. He suggests that the "decision makers" have replaced legitimating metanarratives with a new criterion of judgment: performativity. Under the criterion of performativity, knowledge produced is deemed to be successful or legitimate if it can be determined to contribute to an overall culture of speed and efficiency, utility and commoditization. The ultimate message here is: "be operational (that is, commensurable), or disappear."[8] This is related to, but not commensurate with the old adage "publish or perish." It contains the same urging towards productivity, but performativity as a criterion of judgment goes further: it demands not only productivity, but also the conformity of the *content* of knowledge produced through academic research, which must fit the agreed-upon rules of the established language game. Through performativity, the "decision makers" are able to create an environment of "terror" within academia.[9]

Through "the exercise of terror,"[10] a situation in which research merely reproduces and recycles knowledge is created. In other words, there is only one kind of "progress" in knowledge recognized by this criterion: "the new move within established rules."[11] Performativity as a criterion of judgment cannot recognize the production of new language games as knowledge, because it does not conform to the demands of efficiency, speed, and commoditization. Lyotard's report on knowledge works very well as a description of how the neo-liberal university conceives of the goal and purpose of academic research, which Lyotard prefers to call the "*redeployment* of advanced liberal capitalism."[12] Thus, Lyotard's 30-year-old report is still useful to us: it identifies the terror compelling conformity that undergirds the precarity of labour in the post-secondary sector, and it also, quite helpfully, analyzes this shift in knowledge as a product of the computerization of knowledge under capitalist conditions.

But Lyotard also introduces another potential criterion for the legitimation of knowledge, turning to indeterminate, aesthetic judgment to develop what he refers to as "paralogy." Paralogy presents an alternative to the performativity principle. The goal of paralogy would be the com-

bining of various "language games" in the study of any one particular object.[13] It would not collapse these disparate games into consensus; rather it would allow for and embrace the difference exhibited between local fields of discourse, each with their own rules to follow in their own "language games." This acknowledgement of difference could then be employed to transform the rules of language games, creating entirely new games, and new forms of knowledge. Paralogy, a mode of thinking that moves against established forms of reasoning and language games in order to introduce new (narrative) ideas, must be distinguished from innovation which increases efficiency and productivity by introducing new methods into already established language games, and is, hence, in conformity with the performativity principle.[14]

So Lyotard, like Adorno before him, and Kant before both of them, finds the solution to a stalled, instrumentalized rationality in the preservation of incommensurability within indeterminate aesthetic judgment. The imagination is invoked as the power that will be capable of breaking out of the performance principle in order to reinvigorate a form of knowledge production that can challenge the dominant instrumental rationality. Lyotard takes his lead from postmodern science itself which, according to him, is already involved in a turn to the aesthetic, transforming the status of knowledge as it pursues "undecidables, the limits of precise control, conflicts characterized by incomplete information, *'fracta'* catastrophes, and pragmatic paradoxes." It is "theorizing its own evolution as discontinuous, catastrophic, nonrectifiable, and paradoxical."[15] In accomplishing this transformation of knowledge, science has adopted elements of the aesthetic, as it weaves its own "micronarratives" against the established forms of rationality within the formal language games that delineate individual fields. So while *The Postmodern Condition* is characterized by the demise of metanarratives, it also involves the proliferation of multiple micronarratives.

The Contemporary Situation

Of late, teaching stream positions have been introduced in an attempt to mitigate the effects of decreased government funding upon over-enrolled post-secondary institutions struggling to deliver an education to their students. These positions have also been touted by some as a solution to the precarious employment situation many people holding PhDs find themselves in after graduating, faced with a system that cannot afford to hire them into research positions. And this argument bears some validity, even though teaching stream faculty are often lower paid, and, in some cases, find themselves in a more precarious employment situation (long-term contract or non-tenured continuing contracts) than their tenured or tenure-track peers.

Studies and discussion papers devoted to this topic tend to question how this move will affect teaching quality and whether or not we can afford a hierarchy of faculty based on their relationship to original research.[16] But Lyotard's essay, without, of course, making reference to a formal institutional distinction between those meant to teach and those meant to fulfill a research function, introduces a useful model for thinking about how the content and dissemination of research and education might be affected by the computer age. In the new computer-based society that Lyotard describes, learning circulates as does money within the capitalist system; in this sense we would no longer be concerned to distinguish between "knowledge" and "ignorance," but rather "payment knowledge" and "investment knowledge."[17] Education is split into the kind of knowledge necessary for survival within the economic system (payment knowledge) and the kind of knowledge necessary to optimize the performance of the system (investment knowledge). Knowledge produced in the creation of new language games, legitimated with recourse to the criterion of paralogy, would be external to this pedagogical system.

While teaching stream positions are always discussed as a (sometimes

controversial) solution to an economic problem, it may also be the case that their very existence signals to us that the function of knowledge and the mode of its circulation has undergone a transformation that itself makes possible the introduction of teaching stream positions at the post-secondary level. If we apply the thread of Lyotard's argument to the contemporary organization of post-secondary education, it would seem that the role of the teaching stream instructor is to teach the rules of the language game specific to their discipline (passing on "payment knowledge"), whereas those in tenured positions would ensure the efficient fine-tuning of the rules of the language game ("investment knowledge").

Given that his report was commissioned and written in 1978, we can, perhaps, forgive Lyotard for his tendency towards understatement when he writes; "It is reasonable to suppose that the proliferation of information-processing machines is having, and will continue to have, as much of an effect on the circulation of learning as did advancements in human circulation (transportation systems) and later, in the circulation of sounds and visual images (the media)."[18] With the advent of the world wide web, and most especially the technology enabling chat rooms and live-streaming, we have, in fact, a situation in which the information-processing machine and the circulation of sound and image within media technologies have conspired to make the transportation systems that effected the efficient circulation of human beings through space obsolete. Through advancements in computing and telematics, learning (although it may be more precise to speak here of the transmission of what Lyotard refers to as "payment knowledge") can now take place virtually.

In the postmodern era, Lyotard argues that "the transmission of knowledge is no longer designed to train an elite capable of guiding the nation towards its emancipation, but to supply the system with players capable of acceptably fulfilling their roles at the pragmatic posts required by its institutions."[19] Knowledge is no longer accumulated in the interest of furthering a metanarrative of progress and emancipation. Instead, students learn how to fulfill the requirements of institutions. In other words, the point of accumulating knowledge is to subject oneself to the institution; knowledge allows us to adapt to the requirements of the system. MOOCs (massive online open courses)[20] for example, can deliver "payment knowledge" (the type of knowledge necessary to maintain the system as it currently exists), and they are able to do so efficiently because they transform knowledge into a commodity. Some proponents of the MOOC revolution threaten a social-Darwinian economic shake-down of the post-secondary sector; universities able to embrace innovation by implementing a robust online education presence will survive, as will the truly gifted professoriate, while the less-skilled workers in the post-secondary educational factory will be replaced not by robots, but by world-wide-web-delivered canned lectures delivered by the masters.

But the anxiety over MOOCs on this account is a chimera that hides the transformation of knowledge in the age of online pedagogy. All of these threats can be brought back to Lyotard's contention about the demands of performativity in the computer era. MOOCs promote a particular vision of the purpose of education, which departs from traditional models, according to which researchers bring the knowledge they produce into the classroom. The marketing of online courses by universities makes course content a commodity to be traded by universities, ejecting the instructor from the flow of capital entirely. Furthermore, the advent of computer networking technology means that evaluation of student performance can now be out-sourced to cheaper off-shore labour. The neo-liberalization of the post-secondary sector (or, as Lyotard would have it, the re-invigoration of liberal capitalism in the shadow of a deceased Keynsian economic program) produces knowledge that conforms to the demands of the performativity principle, and curtails the ability of the academic worker to sell his labour, both by commoditizing the actual act of teaching and by subjecting intellectual labour to the same global economic dynamics that have decimated the manufacturing industry in former industrialized nations. While Lyotard did not have a crystal ball enabling him to see the

specific nature of these last two implications of the computerization of societies, he did understand the ramifications of computerized society for the professoriate:

> ...the process of delegitimation and the predominance of the performance criterion are sounding the knell of the age of the Professor: a professor is no more competent than memory bank networks in transmitting established knowledge, no more competent than interdisciplinary teams in imagining new moves or new games."[21]

In 1978, Lyotard envisions the future university as a "professionalist" institution, educating its students in the fields of organizational management, linguistics, informatics, and telematics. With no small measure of foresight, Lyotard predicts that students of the arts and social sciences will fall into two groups: youth who would be among the ranks of the unemployed if not engaged in post-secondary study, and lifelong learners who return periodically to post-secondary education to "update" their skill set. He notes that those students graduating with operational skills will be in high demand for employment.

But he also makes the claim that it will be imperative for universities to endow their students with the capacity for imagination—or what Lyotard refers to as the ability to connect "together series of data that were previously held to be independent."[22] What Lyotard is advocating here is a mode of imaginative thinking capable of bridging disparate language games in order to create new ones—or interdisciplinarity. So while the age of the professor is well and truly over, there will be a role for the professoriate in the future (or, rather, in our contemporary moment): teaching students how to use their imaginations. Lyotard's report presents the argument that interdisciplinarity could potentially save us from the stagnation of knowledge production demanded by the criterion of performativity, although Lyotard harboured no illusions that interdisciplinarity would be a domain exclusive to the professoriate or the professors-in-training. Even though Lyotard suggested that interdisciplinarity might save society from the stagnation of knowledge, he, unlike many others, held out no hope that it could save professors' jobs, or bolster their flagging social value.

Of course, Lyotard's text does not inaugurate interdisciplinarity. The crisis of European universities in the 1960's certainly facilitated the popularity of the concept and interdisciplinary programs had already been well established in North American universities by the time Lyotard's report was released. But *The Postmodern Condition* became an oft-cited text boosting the urgency for universities and funding bodies to facilitate, encourage and demand increased interdisciplinary pedagogy, programs, and research projects. In essence, interdisciplinarity itself became rolled into the performativity principle, another way in which the system demands the operationality of the knowledge produced.

Lyotard identifies the age of computing and telematics (or the long-distance communication of computerized information) with the growth in power of multi-national corporations and the disempowerment of the State. In comparison to the flow of information introduced by satellite communications and computerized databases, the State (and its modern hypostases, including the university and the professoriate) seems to be an especially opaque and rigid institution that is no longer capable of centralizing power, because it does not control the flow of information. This inability to centralize power is another key element of the precariousness of labour, not just within the post-secondary sector, but also within computerized societies at large.

The diffusion and multiplicity of the post-modern era replaces the modern narrative of a stable totalizing socio-economic system. Binding social and economic contracts and permanent institutions are replaced with temporary contracts in "professional, emotional, sexual, cultural, family... international domains [and] political affairs."[23] On

this score, the precarity of post-secondary labour, like the precarity of labour in general, is a function of the postmodern shift away from metanarratives and towards an uncertain future, in which the temporary contract dictates our position within the socio-economic field. Lyotard tells us that "we should be happy that the tendency toward the temporary contract is ambiguous,"[24] because while the temporary contract satisfies the demands of the performance principle, it is "not totally subordinated to the goals of the system, although the system tolerates it."[25] Of course, the system tolerates the temporary contract because it profits from it. But it is also the temporary nature of the contract (be it professional, personal, or social) that, according to Lyotard, facilitates the quest for knowledge legitimated by the criterion of paralogy.[26]

In making this connection, Lyotard hints (but does not argue explicitly) that while the temporary contract increases the commodification of the labourer, it also makes her a free agent within the market system. It is this limited autonomy that allows the labourer to work relatively undetected at the borders of the restrictive language game. Crucially though, Lyotard's championing of knowledge legitimated through the criterion of paralogy makes no social or political claims about this partial and localized break with instrumental rationality. Without modern metanarratives, Lyotard seems unwilling to posit any transcendence of the status quo. The precarity of labour and the precarity of all social and economic relationships, for Lyotard, remains a necessary function of computerized capitalist societies in the postmodern age, and while he remains a critic of capitalism, he offers no escape from it. In this sense, Lyotard's theory is useful insofar as it might help us to understand the technological forces that have produced the material and ideological shifts contributing to the precarity of labour (both in terms of its remuneration and the ephemeral quality of its valuation) within the post-secondary educational sphere. Lyotard's *Postmodern Condition* describes the erosion of the modern, but does not give us much sense of what forms of transformational subjectivity might exist in its stead. Lyotard chronicles the subjection of intellectual labor to the requirements of capitalist production, but he does not concern himself with the implications of the other side of the coin: the mass intellectualization that accompanies the shift in production away from standardized goods manufacture and towards service and communications. Hence, if we want to conceive of labour (intellectual and otherwise) differently, it might be more helpful to turn to another source.

For this, we turn to Maurizio Lazzarato's discussion of immaterial labour in the post-Fordist era of production, formulated almost 20 years after the publication of Lyotard's *Postmodern Condition*. In his essay "Immaterial Labor"[27] Lazzarato describes a shift in production that calls into question the traditional hierarchical distinction between manual and intellectual labour. Gone are the days of standardized manufacturing, when capitalists controlled the manufacturing process and relied upon marketing to sell products to passive consumers. In an era when the economic has invaded all aspects of life, the commodity is no longer a standardized object, but rather a social process that links producer, consumer and product in a communicative relationship. This is why Lazzarato's theory insists upon the term "immaterial labor": what is produced through this labor is not a concrete object, but is rather subjectivities and ideologies that support, and are supported by, the social, the political, and the economic. We, in fact, constitute the commodity produced through immaterial labor.

So while Lyotard, in *The Postmodern Condition*, describes how intellectual labour has been transformed through the invention of computerized communications technologies, Lazzarato tends to focus on the effect these same technologies have had on labour in the manufacturing sphere. What emerges in the confluence of these two perspectives is the realization that intellectual work has become more standardized and commodified, while manual labour has become increasingly intellectual in nature. According to Lazzarato, the shift we've experienced in production is best described with reference to an aesthetic model involving author, reproduction and reception. But it is important to

note that here, the author function is not filled by an individual as it is in the traditional understanding of intellectual labour; it is, rather, "an industrially organized production process."[28] Reproduction is "mass reproduction organized according to the imperatives of profitability"[29] while the receptor is the consumer who communicates his or her needs and desires to the author.

All three "stages" of the process of production within immaterial labor are mutually mediated, and together, they reproduce the subjectivities that are best adapted to the smooth functioning of the process of production. This entire process is subordinated to capitalism, but Lazzaroto notes, importantly, that the communicative/intellectual character of immaterial labor makes possible "the radical autonomy of its productive synergies."[30] The autonomy of this collectivity is not exhausted within its adaptation to capitalism, because the capitalist cannot control the immaterial labor at the heart of this process of production. Lazzarato writes:

> ...because the capitalist entrepreneur does not produce the forms and contents of immaterial labor, he or she does not even produce innovation. For economics there remains only the possibility of managing and regulating the activity of immaterial labor and creating some devices for the control and creation of the public/consumer by means of the control of communication and information technologies and their organizational processes.[31]

Lyotard's *Postmodern Condition* rightly, I think, diagnoses the death of the professoriate. But, it seems to me that the text itself, while it recognizes the impossibility and undesirability of a return to a social model predicated on the exemplary individual, tends toward a melancholic description of its demise. Beyond the potential and, ultimately, limited role that Lyotard reserves for paralogy as a criterion of legitimation for knowledge production, there is little room for an alternative vision for the organization of the social, the political or the economic. We can no longer rely on the exemplary individual to lead society into a better, more humanistic organization of forces, drives, desires, and production, yet Lyotard identifies no other form of agency in its stead.

When Lazzarato turns his attention to the question of intellectual labour, however, a more radical model of subjectivity emerges out of the material and ideological shifts wrought by computerization. Summing up his argument, Lazarrato writes, "These brief considerations permit us to begin questioning the model of creation and diffusion specific to intellectual labor and to get beyond the concept of creativity as an expression of "individuality" or as the patrimony of the "superior" classes."[32] Computerization has enabled the commoditization of all aspects of life and social organization, but it has also enabled and necessitated the expansion of creative intellectual labour into mass society. It is true that we can no longer find solace in the myth of the individual. But this radical transformation also makes it possible for us to conceive of our labour and our subjectivity as collective projects.

There is, of course, a very dark side to this situation; we are collectively engaged in the project of subjecting both ourselves and others to the requirements of capitalism. But there is also a glimmer of hope in Lazzarato's essay; if the autonomy of the collective subject produced through the mass implementation of immaterial forms of labour throughout all levels of society cannot be controlled by the capitalist order, then those to whom Lyotard refers as "the decision makers" do not hold the ultimate power over the workers they aim to manage. To return to an example raised earlier, the advent technology making the delivery of MOOCs a real possibility poses a challenge to traditional definitions of intellectual property. But it is important to note, following Lyotard, that this is the condition of our historical existence, and not a problem to be rectified. Rather than asking how we workers within academia can protect ourselves against the onslaught of the erosion of the individual, the question we must raise is: how can we conceive of knowledge production as a collective project? It is only within the context of this quest that Lyotard's turn to aesthetic judgment in the form of paralogy makes sense as a liberatory strategy.

Section Three

PRECARIOUS NATIONS

Konstantin Kilibarda

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' CONTEMPORARY ART: Precarious Labour and Decolonization

In "Humanity Beyond the Regime of Labour," Shona N. Jackson argues that dominant producerist understandings of labour rely on colonial and racialized imaginaries of working bodies. Eurocentric understandings of labour have, in fact, continuously informed philosophical narratives attempting to legitimate the settler colonial state's expropriation of territory (John Locke) or in affirming heavily racialized notions of the 'human' (GWF Hegel). Moving beyond producerist framings of labour thus becomes essential in decolonizing not only the spaces of the settler-colonial state, but also the ways in which different bodies are positioned and valued within its borders. The panelists for this session, therefore, attempt to rethink (and unsettle) the relationship between precarity, labour, and colonialism.

Francisco-Fernando Granados' "This will have been the place: An Aesthetic Education and the Nation to Nation Dialogue" takes a cue from Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak's re-reading of Schiller's 'aesthetic education' by questioning how we view objects of knowledge. Positioning himself as both a refugee to Canada and a settler within its space, Granados reflects on the 'negative space of knowledge' that is fostered by the settler colonial state's continuous erasures of indigenous peoples from narratives of the nation. Granados thus humbly attempts to trace the "contours of my own ignorance" by recounting several formative moments in coming to understand the indigenous histories of resistance in what is today known is Canada. These include meetings with Alanis Obamsawin and watching her critically acclaimed film *Kanasatakhe: 270 Years of Resistance*. In light of these moments, Granados asks us to think through what the call by #IdleNoMore activists for a nation-to-nation dialogue would look like, asking settlers to unlearn and unsettle their own understandings of space.

Cheryl L'Hirondelle's *NDN: Digital Precarity*, was a performative and participatory piece, mixing humour and personal reflections aimed at producing a 'temporary autonomous zone' designed to further reimagine notions of precarity, artistic practice, and ways of decolonizing space. Turning the room into a pitch-black environment, L'Hirondelle used five volunteers equipped with flashlights to represent in turn the direction and values of north (obedience), south (humility), west (respect) as well as the values of 'love' and 'happiness.' L'Hirondelle asks us to consider questions of where we are located, whose territories we inhabit, our purpose and intention within these spaces, the materiality of our practices and the materials used as artists, the precarity of artistic practice, openness to failure, etc. Positioned around the room L'Hirondelle's volunteers are asked to alight their flashlights at a

particular moment, crossing over each other, thus recreating the five poles of a luminescent teepee. For L'Hirondelle, this moment of crossing, this performance, becomes a temporary autonomous zone where dialogue is possible. As she notes: "One thing about creating a temporary autonomous zone is that it's important that all those poles touch and rest upon each other, so that it is a holistic structure." It is in that spirit that the pieces that follow are presented, overlapping on a number of points and opening a critical space to reconsider the meaning of precarity through anticolonial, decolonial, and postcolonial practices.

Terrence Houle's *Friend or Foe* was the fifth installment of his ongoing series of performances addressing ideas of memory, time, identity and colonial violence. Throughout the series he has examined various versions of his personal history and his Blackfoot heritage, by using native sign language and signals––which he had to learn from a book by George Fronval entitled *Indian Signals and Sign Language*. Borrowing from Chris Markers famous avant-garde film *La Jetee*, Houle builds a complex narrative of his ancestor who, like the main character in Marker's film, travels through time via photographic stills (in Houle's case a number of family photographs). While travelling, Houle's ancestor leads us through a series of narratives that intersect, parallel, and clash to tell a story about how language and culture are retained in spite of colonial violence. What emerges from the series of images and sounds that Houle creates and interweaves with his live performance, is the ephemeral and ultimately unstable state of memory; its precarity is palpable, yet we as spectators become aware that we in fact are witnessing memory's reclamation enacted by the artist via his performance––we are his witnesses.

Finally, Adrian Stimson's *Buffalo Boy's Chief Rogue* was a performance from Stimson's ongoing series dealing with various aspects of Canadian state's racist policies which still privilege its colonial relationship with Indigenous communities over nation-to-nation dialog. Stimson's provocative *Buffalo Boy* brings to the surface the many problematic (to say the least) legal, economic, cultural, and political decisions which have injured the Indigenous population in Canada many times. What becomes evident from Stimson's performance is the urgent work of decolonization needed in Canada and the precarious status that this work has at this point.

FRANCISCO-FERNANDO GRANADOS

THIS WILL HAVE BEEN THE PLACE:
An Aesthetic Education and the Nation-to-Nation Dialogue

Being a Canadian citizen of Latin American origin participating in a panel on First Nations' contemporary art, I would like to establish how I position myself in this discussion. It is crucial for settlers participating in a dialogue around decolonization to become self-critical and self-aware, yet-not self-conscious. In this case, this means stating my goal in making this statement: to be in conversation with contemporary Indigenous culture rather than talking about it in a way that renders it as an object of study. For a Canadian who is aware of his status as a settler, moving from appropriation to dialogue requires resisting the deeply rooted habit of approaching Indigenous knowledge as a site of resource extraction.[1] It requires stopping oneself from speaking on behalf of Indigenous people, even if it is with the best of intentions. No excuses. It requires that settlers claim the State and speak on behalf of Canada as a colonial system in order to begin the process of changing these colonial dynamics. It requires recognizing that these dynamics must be changed because they fail to acknowledge the vast range of occupied nations that are the sources of contemporary Indigenous cultures. It means shifting our understanding of our material conditions in order to rebuild these relationships in the shape of what the Idle No More Movement has proposed as a Nation-to-Nation dialogue.[2]

On the part of the settlers, the Nation-to-Nation dialogue is a precarious yet fundamental process that requires us to unlearn so that we can learn again: so that we can learn differently. In his essay *Extra-Rational Aesthetic Action and Cultural Decolonization*, David Garneau states that:

> "Cultural decolonization is the perpetual struggle to make both Indigenous and settler peoples aware of the complexity of our shared social condition, and how this legacy informs every person and institution in these territories. The soft hope is that education will lead to improvements in the lives of Aboriginal people – as Canadians. The more radical desire is that Canadians and their institutions will Indigenize. Due to its oxymoronic paradox, cultural decolonization in a still colonial Canada is not about working toward a classical post-colonial state, where colonizers sail home, dragging their institutions behind them, but toward a non-colonial society in which Aboriginal nations and settlers share Indigenous territories [...] Cultural decolonization in Canada is about at once unsettling settlers and, ironically, helping them to adapt, to better settle themselves as noncolonial persons within Indigenous spaces."[3]

The title of my presentation plays with the title of this conference, *This Could Be the Place*, to turn it into *This Will Have Been The Place*. This re-naming is a response to Garneau's assertion that the task of cultural decolonization is perpetual and thus continuous. The task of becoming noncolonial is therefore incalculable, both culturally but also socio-politically, yet if settlers in this land are to live up to their end of the bargain,

they need to engage in this task of continuous becoming. The crucial question here becomes: *can there be a politics of solidarity that acknowledges the differential distribution of precarity in the colonial relationship?* The complexity and awkwardness of my use of the future anterior tense in the title articulates something of the spirit of this task. The hope here is that this will have been the place where decolonization has happened. Garneau's definition of the term imagines not only a Nation-to-Nation dialogue, but a co-existence between nations beyond the classic post-colonial model: the shift to a *non-colonial* society. Attempting to learn from Garneau, this text tries to unsettle the imaginative and intellectual habits of the settler.

I am particularly, although not exclusively, interested in settlers like myself who have not lived in Canada their entire lives. The process of becoming "aware of the complexity of our shared social condition"[4] begins with carefully tracing the contours of our own ignorance; an ignorance of histories and events that should be part of a public collective memory that is not easily available. For me, the most moving example of this history is the resistance of the Mohawk warriors in Kanehsatake and Khanawake in 1990, the so-called Oka Crisis. I first heard about these events in 2010, 20 years after they took place. There was a special on CBC Radio 1. The story focused on the sister of the police officer who was unfortunately killed during one of the early altercations. The story of the illegal plans to build a golf course and of the Mohawk resistance was merely a backdrop to the tale of the officer's sister's benevolence and resilience.

I could not have known the story of the Mohawk warriors because I was not here when it happened. I came to Canada as a refugee claimant from Guatemala with my family when I was a teenager, in 2001. We began living in what I did not know was unceded Coast Salish Territory, [5] a place now known as New Westminster, British Columbia. Even as a so-called 'newcomer' without any Canadian citizenship rights, I had access to free public education until the end of high school. As I've looked back on my secondary education, I have noticed that my ignorance of contemporary Indigenous cultures and the structure of their relationship to Canada were not only left uncorrected by the public educational system, but were in fact encouraged through neglect. In Social Studies courses throughout grades 11 and 12 there wasn't a *single* mention of Indigenous people, let alone history or culture, in either textbooks or in classroom conversation. Asking about this omission years later, I was told that First Nations are covered in grades 8-10 in the B.C. educational system. The history of Canada in the *Socials 11* course began with Prime Minister MacDonald and focused mainly on the glories of the Canadian military effort in the First and Second World Wars.

I only became aware of this ignorance as I started to become an artist. Fears about the supposed propensity for newcomer, particularly Latino, youth to become involved with drugs and gangs in the Greater Vancouver area prompted my parents to send me to Britannia Community Centre after school, where there was a Latin American Youth Outreach Program designed to keep kids out of trouble. Most boys played soccer, but that was not going to work for me, so I began attending the art program. Through the program, I became more and more involved in arts projects for youth, until in 2004 I began working in a media collective with a group of other young people of immigrant, refugee and Indigenous backgrounds on a documentary project looking at mainstream representations of racialized youth. Documentary filmmaker and community activist Joah Lui led the project. It was called *Redefining Canadian*, and it was a participatory action research project Joah did with the support of artist-run centre Video In, now know as VIVO Media Arts Centre. *Redefining Canadian* was part of her dissertation towards

a Masters in Communication at Simon Fraser University. This project constituted my earliest form of art education, before I even thought of myself as an artist. My memory of the project is blurry. It's not online because we made VHS tapes. This was just before the time when everything began to be posted on YouTube and Vimeo, so it only exists in my memory. The only thing I remember about making the documentary now that I am older is what I learned from having the chance to hold a boom mic during an interview we did with Alanis Obomsawin, the seminal Canadian documentary filmmaker of Abenaki descent. She was giving a talk at the Pacific Cinemateque in downtown Vancouver and agreed to give our group an interview upon Joah's request. I remember her talking about using singing as a way to tell stories when she first began, before she became a filmmaker. She also spoke about going into communities and talking to people, saying that she never went with a camera first, out of respect for her subjects. Instead, she said she began by having conversations with people, which she audio-recorded in order to make them feel more comfortable. Filming came afterwards. I now recognize her words as my first lesson on the ethics of representation.

As the years went by, I went from refugee claimant to convention refugee, to permanent resident, to Canadian citizen. I moved out of Vancouver after getting a BFA, came to Toronto, and was finishing my MFA. I was beginning to apply for sessional teaching jobs. The precarious conditions of being a refugee gave way to a much more privileged yet-still fragile position: that of an art educator in an era of diminishing labour standards. The summer before I first started to teach, I got a notice on Facebook that an Alanis Obomsawin film was going to be screened for free at the TIFF Bell Lightbox, followed by a Q and A. The film was *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*, the first in a series of movies Obomsawin made after living through Oka alongside the Mohawk warriors. I remembered her name from the interview quite a while back, and I decided to go see the film. I was curious, as I still did not understand much about the conditions that had brought about the crisis.

I was moved to tears by the movie. They were tears of sadness and rage at realizing the depth and the breadth of my ignorance. I was shocked that my education had failed me by not mentioning this event, only one among many that have formed the brutalizing history of the relationship between the Canadian government and Indigenous nations. The tears were useless. Tears don't change colonial relations. With teaching on my mind, I asked Obomsawin a question during the dialogue after the film. I asked what role education played in the distribution of pieces like *Kanehsatake*. She responded by saying that they were teaching tools. She had created the films precisely so that they would be taught in schools and people would not forget about what had happened.

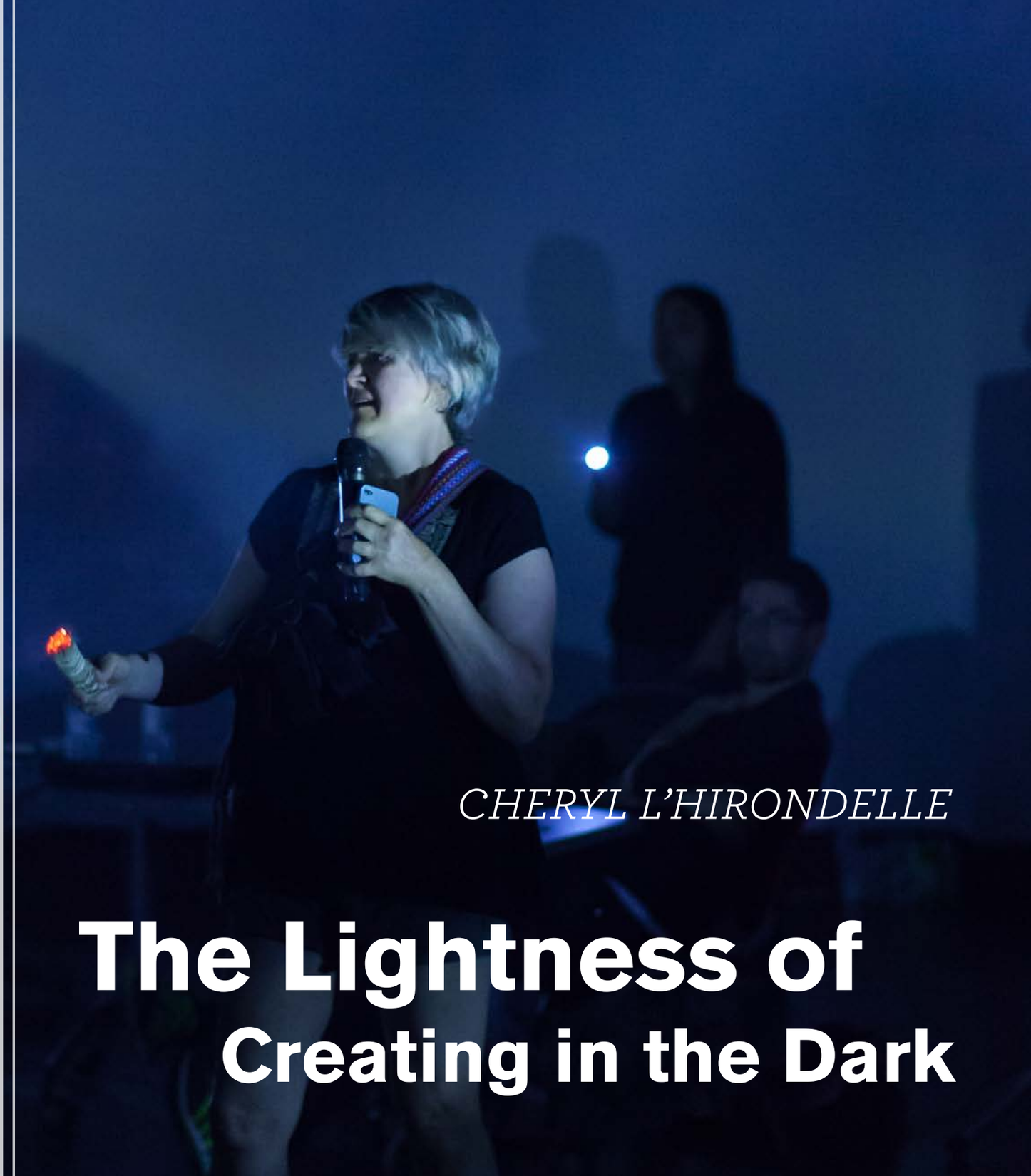
Obomosawin's response to my question now echoes a quote by Bengali literary critic and cultural theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Speaking in regards to another colonial situation during a memorial lecture dedicated to Palestinian literary critic Edward W. Said. In it she says:

> I... do not believe there is a direct line from art and philosophy to social justice... When artists and philosophers call for social justice, they are acting as responsible citizens of the world. Themselves perhaps changed by practicing art and philosophy, sometimes using the weight of their prestige... in order to make an appeal. The real contribution of artists and philosophers is that they can be made to change minds. Art and philosophy detached from their producers become instruments for viewer, listener, player, teacher, to be changed from mere self-interest. That word,

teacher... it is our task always to work for the future.[6]

Observing the coincidences between these statements begins an exploration of how an aesthetic education can serve as a tool towards building a Nation-to-Nation dialogue in the Canadian context. My understanding of the term *aesthetic* is not monopolized by its classical 18th century European sense. I take as a model Spivak's re-fashioning of the term. She defines aesthetic education as "the training of the imagination for epistemological performance". This means shifting the way in which objects of knowledge are constructed; it operates through what she calls "affirmative sabotage:" learning from the inside what you attempt to critique in order to be able to use it. For settlers, this way of teaching and learning could become a way to claim Canada in order to productively undo colonial mentality. In the face of the neo-liberalization of the academic institution, we must insist on the importance of both formal and informal educational spaces as sites where decolonization will have taken place.

The process of de-colonization, particularly for those of us who are so-called 'first-generation Canadians,' requires a shift in thinking: moving beyond simply learning about Indigenous nations and their histories. Instead, this process should push us on to a place where we are *learning from* Indigenous artists and thinkers. Instead of claiming what we learn as an object of knowledge that makes us 'good' multicultural subjects, settlers should use this learning as a tool to map what we have left to learn. A tracing of what we do not know that becomes a space to listen. The hope is to engage with a range of Indigenous voices without collapsing them into a monolith. This learning should turn citizenship into a political tool that can be used to hold our elected officials accountable for failing to uphold their agreements with First Nations, while transforming the settler: Indigenizing us in non-colonial ways.



CHERYL L'HIRONDELLE

The Lightness of Creating in the Dark

I have countless memories of doing things in the dark. Don't we all? There's an inherent and enigmatic oneness-of-being with the great mystery that an absence of light can offer.

And now here's another mystery. Smoke! Some sage smudge will further clarify this situation (sage smoke is traditionally used for cleansing). Its embers swirl and unfurl in front of me as I waft the smudge stick to and fro. Red hot molten dripping finger tips showing me the way as I move through this room of chairs, beings, experiences and points-of-view.

I can feel you. Our rational minds all struggle with these sensations as we breath deeply, in unison. We are after all inside a university building at a symposium during a panel. It is a hot summer day outside and yet in here the air conditioning is bone chilling. And the irony is that some of us are now worried that the room could catch fire even though the exit signs are clearly marked. This could be the place.

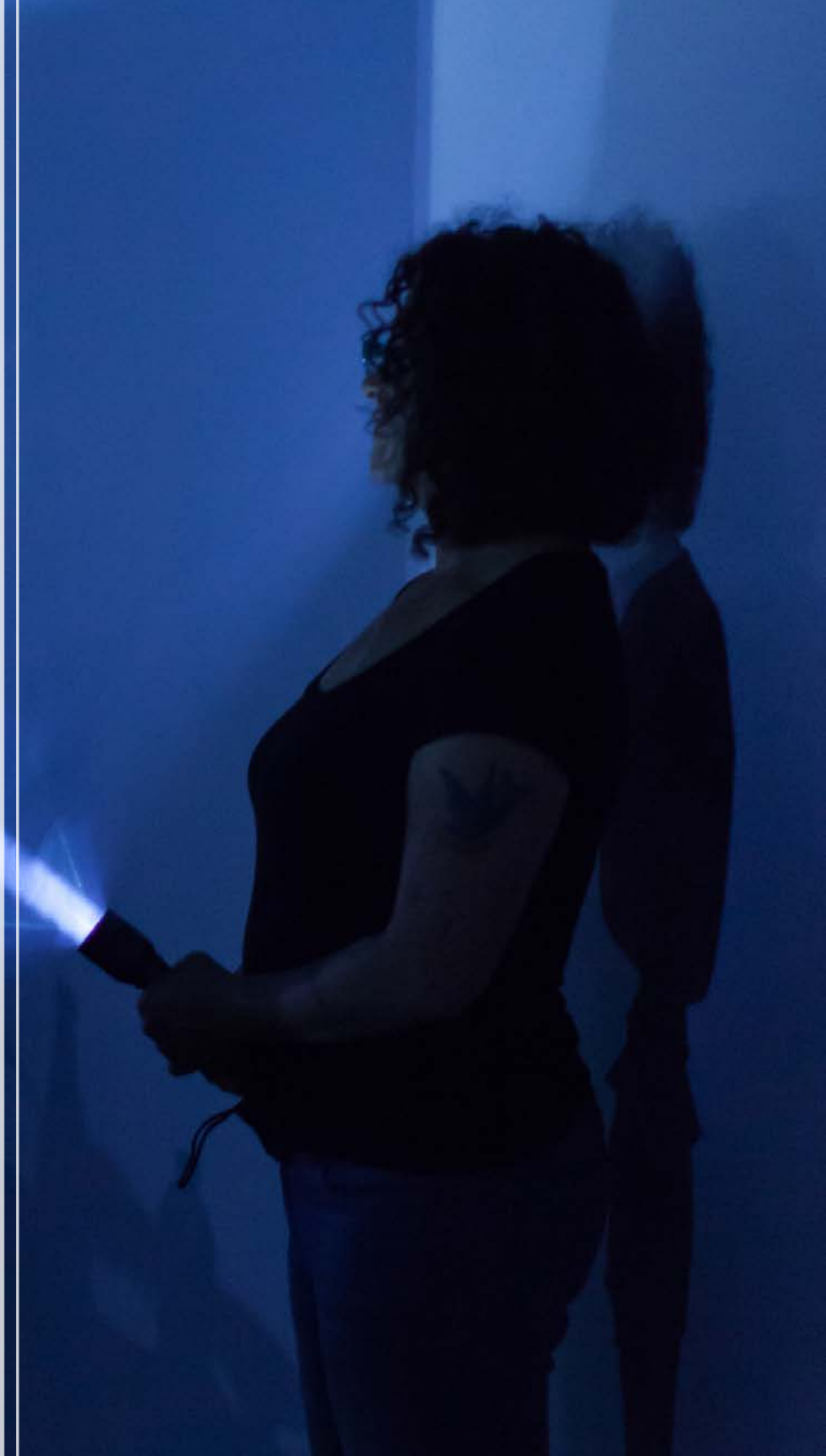
Why am I doing this? What are we here for? Maybe it has something to do with an artistic process - working with the unknown, testing out new materials, metaphorically fumbling around in the dark until the proverbial lights come on. The discomfort combined with wonder, even exhilaration you may be sensing is what I feel when the lights are on. Good, so we're all feeling it.

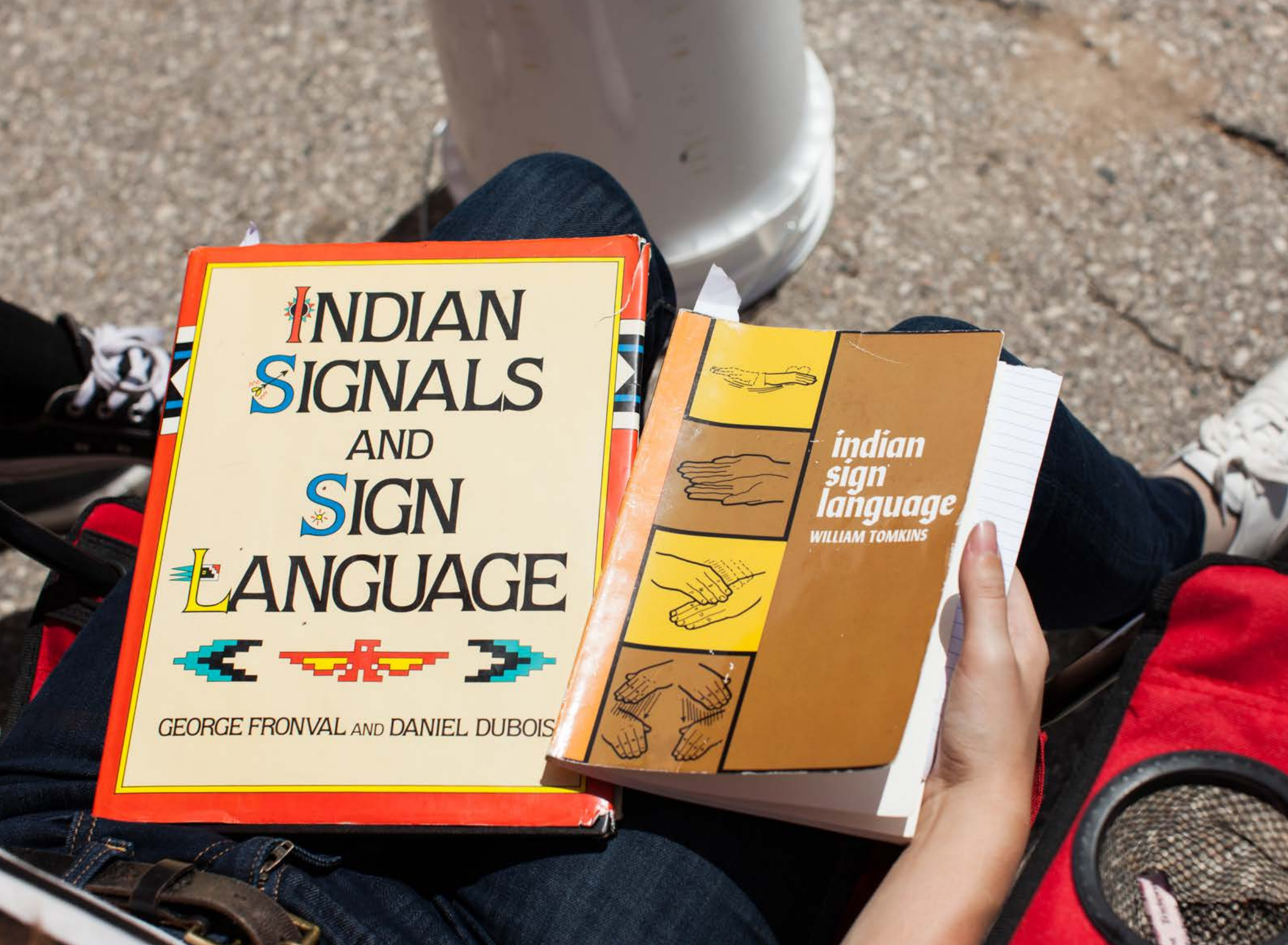
Maybe we can do something together then. I tell you what we're doing to lessen the anxiety. We're erecting a tipi out of light and smoke. After all, this could be the place.

At some point I decided that if I was going to be working so hard being in front of people that I should at least be doing something difficult. Like building something. This epiphany might have been around the time that I realized that if I was building something I probably couldn't do it alone. Or that it would be too difficult. I had tried it once before in the 80's, erecting an 18-foot tetrahedron in a performance piece called The Shapes of Time. I realized many years later I was really channeling a tipi all along. Oh and then there was the performance with the crazy woman who sewed herself inside a white tent that hung from the ceiling (and all the while she sang about a tipi)...

The truth of the matter is that I don't know much about a studio based material practice. That's what getting oneself kicked out of art college got me. But I am invested in learning about how to work with people and how to get people to work with me. Or play. Or sing. Whatever. What this process of building a tipi is teaching me is that everyone wants to be a performance artist. Or maybe it really is that everyone wants to help build a tipi. Or then again, maybe everyone just wants to be part of something. Make something happen.

I ask you a question or two and ask you to keep breathing, tell you not to worry about knowing the answers. And don't worry about the smoke either. It will all be over soon. My five friends shine the flashlights I've given them at an imaginary point in the center of the ceiling. On a technical level, the experiment is a failure. Not enough smoke, the ceiling too low and the exit signs clearly marked. Yet the darkness, a microphone in one hand, smoldering smudge stick in the other and walking around the room and talking is working for me. So building this tipi out of light and smoke is working for me. And in feeling okay I feel you too. There, I hope I've said enough. I will end here and thank you. Yes, this could be the place.




INDIAN SIGNALS AND SIGN LANGUAGE
GEORGE FRONVAL AND DANIEL DUBOIS
indian sign language
WILLIAM TOMKINS

FRIEND OR FOE #4

TERRANCE HOULE

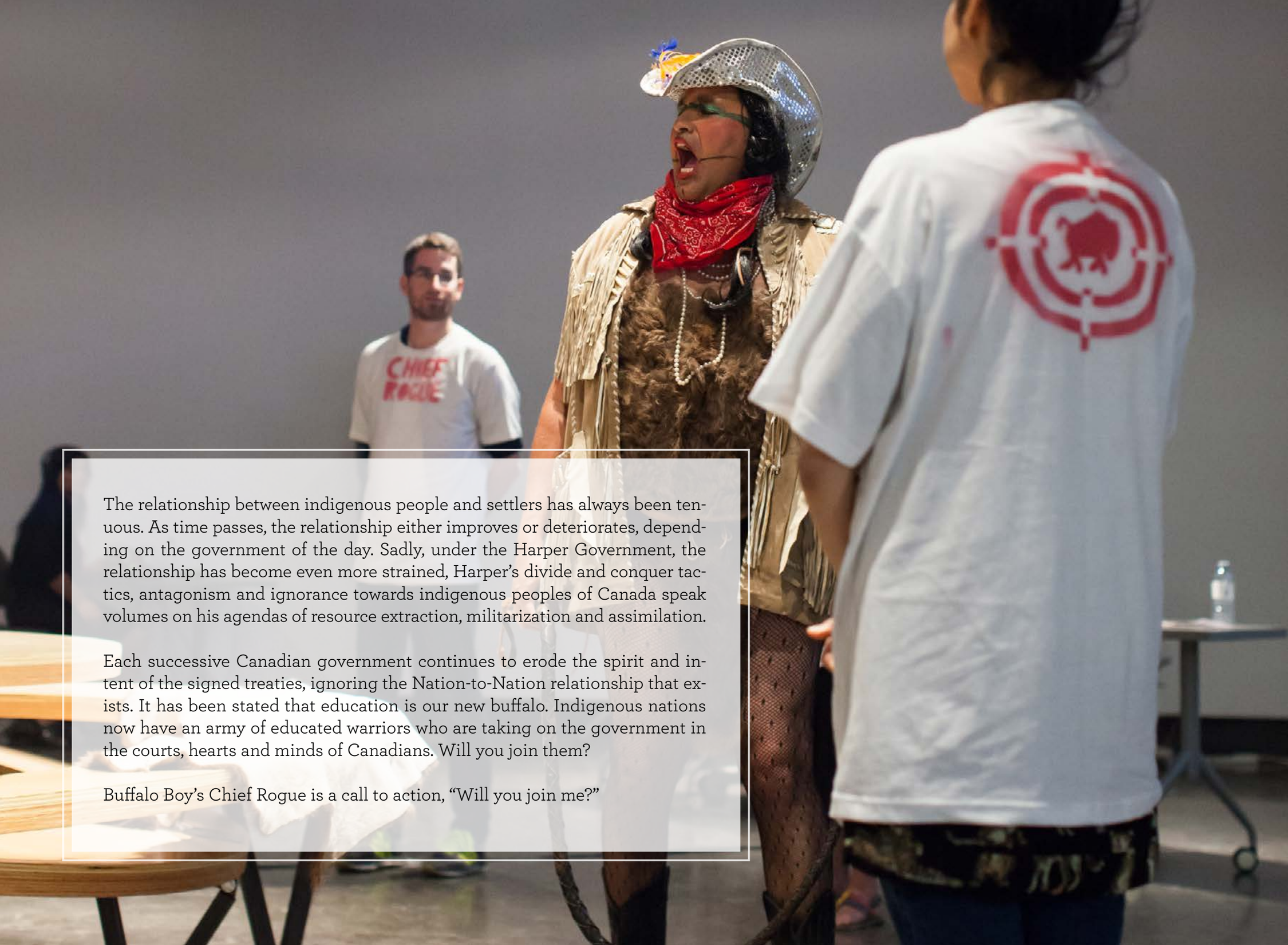
Friend or Foe is my ongoing performance/installation series spanning across the Americas, using Native American Sign Language and Signals to communicate personal/general stories, history, time travel, myths, legends, life and diverse points of view. I started this project in 2010, after 7 months of not producing any artwork, my personal life had gone through a huge change and this work became a major catalyst for a new direction in performance. I had purchased the book *Indian Signals and Sign Language* by George Fronval and Daniel DuBoi. The Native American Sign Language was used for trading, communication and ceremony between some tribes. I create alternative narratives relating to land, history, and culture by engaging this particular form of communication. My audiences/witnesses are invited to communicate and interpret my utterances as I speak, however inevitably they find it hard to do so. The resulting failure to understand further underscores the intricate and complicated history of indigenous-settler relationships, and of family and community histories.


BUFFALO BOY'S CHIEF ROGUE

ADRIAN STIMSON

I think that members of the House would agree that we should … condemn in the strongest terms the threat of those rogue chiefs who are threatening the security of Canadians, their families and taxpayers.

—Valcourt, said during parliamentary question period 5/15/2014



The relationship between indigenous people and settlers has always been tenuous. As time passes, the relationship either improves or deteriorates, depending on the government of the day. Sadly, under the Harper Government, the relationship has become even more strained, Harper's divide and conquer tactics, antagonism and ignorance towards indigenous peoples of Canada speak volumes on his agendas of resource extraction, militarization and assimilation.

Each successive Canadian government continues to erode the spirit and intent of the signed treaties, ignoring the Nation-to-Nation relationship that exists. It has been stated that education is our new buffalo. Indigenous nations now have an army of educated warriors who are taking on the government in the courts, hearts and minds of Canadians. Will you join them?

Buffalo Boy's Chief Rogue is a call to action, "Will you join me?"

Buffalo Boy walks around the room, eyeing everyone, seeking someone who will join him in this ongoing battle. The Buffalo roam in the background. Buffalo Boy whips in the four directions, calling the powers of the Great Mystery to guide and protect this space, these people and our collective future.

Like the Buffalo of times past, we are the target and Harper and his conservatives are the hunters. We are the savages, the barbarians, the eternal terrorists, the Rogue Chiefs, we will always be feared even though we the original inhabitants of Turtle Island have been terrorized for the past 522 years...

Will you join me?


CHIEF
ROGUE